

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

THE RIGHT OF TRANSLATION IS RESERVED.

[REGISTERED FOR TRANSMISSION ABROAD]

No. 825.—VOL. XXXII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 22, 1879.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[IN BITTEREST GRIEF.]

CHRISTINE'S REVENGE; OR, O'HARA'S WIFE.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“Ah! what can ail thee, wretched wight,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

“Warr!” said Christine, in shrill tones, then, “Come in,” she shouted, and there entered Elaine, not dressed for the drive, languid, pale, wearing her loose blue morning wrapper; her hair was resting in a brilliant mass on her shoulders. She stood before her governess, and looked at her with a world of wild sorrow and reproach in her beautiful eyes.

“Ma chère, not dressed for the drive? Are you not well?”

“I am ill. Oh, how I wish that I was dead!”

“Nonsense, Lady Elaine, rouse yourself. You must cast off this depression. True, we can hear nothing of Roland. I have inquired on all hands. The young idiot will not come to us, but, never fear, we shall find him, and then when he finds how much you love him he will repent of his wicked tempers—repent in dust and ashes; kneel at your feet like a lover in a melodrama, and then you have your beautiful little Surrey estate, all your own. Happy girl, happy girl! Twelve thousand a year and the man you love. It is the fortune of a princess in

a fairy tale. What a shame to complain and talk of dying. If you were me—”

“Mademoiselle, I say again that I wish I was dead!” Lady Elaine said, seating herself at the end of a chintz-covered couch, and looking gloomily on the ground. “I am not yet sixteen, my property will not be mine for more than two years, before that time my mother will have killed me!”

“In which case, ma chère, you will have your wish that you were dead. Don’t talk nonsense. I think I know what is on your mind; I have suspected it for some time, but you have loads of time—nothing to fear. You are an honourable wedded wife, you know.”

“Wife of a husband who has deserted me, and whom I shall never see again. And flirting—flirting daily with a man I hate, against my will. A man who has not asked me to be his wife, for he sees too well how I despise him—he knows what I should say; but a man who tells me that I shall be his wife—oh, it is dreadful!”

“You choose to make it so,” Christine answered, lightly. “There is truly nothing at all very dreadful in it. You can laugh in your sleeve when you reflect that you will never marry him at all, since you are married.”

“I hate deceit,” Lady Elaine said, moodily—“I hate and detest deceit, mademoiselle. My mother is to come here in two months—my mother and a number of visitors—that horrible Lady Julia among others. Oh! it is too much, mademoiselle!” turning suddenly and passionately towards her governess. “Tell me what I am to do when they are all here at Christmas, and see me and know what I know now; and I cannot tell them Lou Roland O’Hara’s wife!”

“Sufficient unto the day,” replied mademoiselle; “you don’t know what will happen before Christmas. I have no doubt I can arrange all that very comfortably for you; you know I am skilful in some things, so don’t despair. Cheer up, my sweet Elaine; believe me that in choosing love before lucre, you have chosen the greatest happiness that life can offer. Now go and change your dress, let your maid arrange your hair; you really must attend this boating party.”

Elaine obeyed her governess. She attended the party, and the earl’s admiration for the “school girl” reached fever height.

Time fled fast. A bright, warm summer seems to make itself wings and flee away much more swiftly than a dull, cold, miserable winter ever does.

Autumn came early into the lovely valley of the Morah that year. The winds arose shrill and sharp, and shook the leaves from the trees in showers.

Those that remained were yellow and crimson—gorgeous in their decay, but melancholy in their beauty—melancholy, that is, in the eyes of Elaine, for by this time the girl’s trouble seemed greater than she could bear.

As yet none suspected the secret which should have been the joy and pride of her pure heart; but she fancied that every mortal that looked on her read her tragic story in her eyes.

In a week now Lady Donnamore would arrive at the castle. The earl was going for a fortnight into Scotland. Perhaps that fortnight would stretch into a month.

Elaine thought of her gentle father with a

shudder. How he would grieve when he knew of her wild wedding, and he must know some day. All the world must know it.

Elaine would have given all she possessed at this time for the power to flee to Roland, her husband, and share his life, whatever it might be, and never see the faces of her parents more.

"Where is Roland?" she said, continually, to her own heart.

But she heard nothing of him. No clue could she find. Even his poor demented mother had not appeared in the valley during the whole of the summer.

Lady Elaine was walking alone in a solitary part of the park. It was a gusty evening at the very end of September. The season had been so cold and rainy that one might almost have imagined it to be a whole month later. Elaine felt cold.

She wore a dark dress of velvet, a white woolen shawl wrapped across her chest, and a shady hat on her head. Elaine shivered, and repeated to herself the wicked and wild words which she had spoken to Christine in the summer:

"I wish I was dead!"

Then she turned and looked across the park to where the purple hills stood in the red glow of the sinking sun. The day god was going down very slowly behind those hills. A mass of wild, dark, ragged clouds was sailing along towards the sea.

Elaine looked down the valley. Soon it would be wrapped in shadow. A few more weeks, and it would be white with frost, anon whiter with snow.

"Where shall I be then?" said the girl wife to herself. "I hope I shall be dead; but, if not, I must be away. Yes, mademoiselle must take me away. If she will not I must go myself. I—"

At that moment she heard a rustle among the brushwood in her rear. She looked back. She had passed through wild plantation to reach this alley between tall swaying trees, where she was walking, and now some men were climbing the same steep path which she had descended. Some men? Several. She heard many voices, many footsteps on the dead leaves.

Instinct prompted her to crouch behind a great thorn tree which grew close to the hollow trunk of an old oak. Thus she was hidden, and she saw and counted about a dozen men, who came up from the plantation, and then stood in the alley of trees amidst which the melancholy wind was piping.

Men of various ages and conditions; men cheerful and well-clad; men ragged and haggard; men fierce, wild-eyed, savage.

They formed themselves into a group, and looked backwards across the wild plantation to the park beyond, and the fir-wood and the turrets of Donnamore Castle just visible against the lurid heaven.

"If ever a place was doomed it's yonder pile," said a lean, black-eyed, shabby man, pointing with his thin hand towards the castle.

Another man, yellow, wrinkled, bald, very well dressed, and with a ruby glistening at his scraggy throat—a man whom our readers will recognise as the Russian at the Fenian meeting—chuckled gleefully.

"Yes, but we must wait until the castle is filled with lordly guests. I think we ought to bring a cannon, and blow its four walls to the four winds," he said.

"Nothing of the sort," cried a large, blonde man in showy attire; "no! We must enter it as the mob entered the Tuilleries in '92—or was it '93? We must swarm over the grand staircases and into the grand drawing-rooms and help ourselves to whatever seems good in our own eyes; but all we came here for is to reconnoitre, not to talk. Come, set to work."

Most of the men present took paper and pencils out of their pockets, and seemed to write fiercely for a few minutes. Then they went about with long ribbons measuring the ground. Elaine trembled where she crouched. Just now she wished herself dead; but she did not wish any of these Fenians to find her and shoot her.

Believing herself in danger, the young lady was as tenacious of life as her own sister Clarice, or any other perfectly happy damsel could have been.

Presently all the men trooped away as stealthily as they had come. They went on towards the hills and the ragged clouds and the wild fading sky, and then Elaine sprang up.

"I wonder where Roland is," she said, gloomily. "Those are Fenians. I am a Fenian's wife. I ought to be with Roland, wherever he is, and I will! Yes, he may refuse me; he may tell me that he will not have me; but I am his wife, and I will share his life. I have no right among these people, nor with the gay visitors who are coming next week—Lady Saville and the rest. She will guess everything at once. I wish I could get away before mamma comes."

Poor Elaine, in the magnitude of her own trouble, lost sight of the threatening attitude of the Fenians—never realised that her father's house was in truth marked out for pillage, and her father's family, perhaps, for murder by these savage zealots.

"I wonder where Roland is?" she kept repeating to herself, as she walked homewards. "Oh, if I could find Roland!"

She had made up her mind that if she ever saw Roland again, no matter who was present—no matter under what strange or painful circumstances they might meet, that she would ask him to take her again to his heart, to let her share his life, whatever that life might be. Alas, poor Elaine, she little dreamt under what terrible conditions she would meet with her husband the next time.

The weeks rolled on; the winds grew more and more boisterous; storms drove in upon the green valley of the Morah; storms from the wild Atlantic, which made havoc among the woods at Donnamore, stripping branches from the trees, tearing up some elms and beeches by the roots. The park was flooded, for the river overflowed. The rain fell in a deluge. Then again the wind arose and rushed through the valley like an invading army.

This weather lasted far into October, and then there was a calm. The Indian summer, serene and smiling, warm during the day as the fairest May weather, came and reigned over the country for two whole brilliant weeks.

There was a haze over the pale blue of the heavens, but the sun shone. There was scarcely a breath of wind; the rich autumn foliage that remained in the woods shone in the sun like rubies and gold and amethysts. The air was delicious, loaded with the scents of autumn.

In the noble pastures and grand terraced gardens at Donnamore the beds yet blazed with crimson and scarlet and purple flowers. A few more weeks, and they would all lie dead and withered in the ground, but for the present they raised their gorgeous heads and smiled in the brief bright sunshine.

Lady Elaine sat alone in a summer-house in a rather secluded portion of the Donnamore gardens. A long alley of rose trees, which arched overhead in a somewhat quaint and fanciful style, led to this retreat, which was built in the form of a Swiss chalet, but with a thatched roof and porch, both of which for three months in the year were a perfect bower of roses. The front of the summer-house was now ablaze with the gorgeous crimson of a Virginia creeper.

You entered the summer-house from the rose-walk by a side door, but once seated inside on the little cushioned sofa before the table, you looked out upon a flowered lawn which ended at a broad flight of marble steps leading up to a noble terrace where stone and marble vases, and fountains, and gorgeous flowers in the season made a noble and beautiful picture.

Elaine sat listless in this summer-house. A book lay open on the table before her, but she never turned a leaf nor read a page; her eyes looked on the flowered lawn; one great gorgeous patch of colour in the midst, shaped like a church window and blazing with scarlet and crimson and amber autumn flowers; beyond

that the marble steps and the terrace, but Elaine saw nothing of these.

"I wish I could find Roland! I wish that I was dead!"

These were the two alternate wishes of O'Hara's wife. Listless she sat there in a dumb and stirless apathy.

The young Earl of Levison had all of a sudden taken his departure the week before for the western highlands. He had been brief, but hearty in his leave-takings. Almost his last words to Elaine had been brimful of an ardent and eager love. Something in his manner puzzled Lady Elaine. He did not ask her to try to love him as he had done so often. He only had said:

"Elaine, cheer up. You are sad, but I am faithful. Only remember whatever happens I have sworn that you shall be my wife."

Poor Elaine! O'Hara had sworn that she should become his bride; it had fallen out as he wished, and the result had been misery to both. Would it again fall out that she would become a wife?—this time loathing the thought.

"Better death," she said to herself; yet with it all she had a dull, stupid, obstinate conviction that somehow—in spite of her abhorrence of the thought—in spite of her being O'Hara's wife—she was doomed to don the coronet of the Carrig Flyns, to become a countess and a marchioness.

"I would rather die," the girl said, to herself, drearily. "Yes," she added, after a pause, "I—I wish—yes. Oh, how I wish that I was dead! One thing is certain, I must get away before my mother comes here. Mattie will not help me. If she will not come with me, I must go alone. Yes; why should I linger? I have five pounds. I will go to Dublin and take a room and—die."

Thus far had Lady Elaine proceeded with this melancholy train of thought, when there came a shadow between her and the sunshine. She looked up wearily, and saw her mother, Lady Donnamore, descending the terrace steps. Lady Donnamore, in travelling costume, a long, cañemere cloak of dark grey; a soft, broad-leafed hat of the same tint. The countess looked as distinguished in this unpretending attire as in her velvets and silks and rubies and diamonds. Elaine's heart sank; she grew white to the lips. She tried to get up and turn away, but her trembling limbs refused to carry her. She rose, but she was obliged to sit down again.

"I wish that I was dead," she said, and she put her hand to her side.

Lady Donnamore crossed the lawn with a slow and stately step. Elaine wondered what induced her proud mother to come all that way to seek her. Presently the countess was near enough for Elaine to note the expression of her face.

Lady Donnamore was pale. True, hers was a white complexion, but there was now another meaning in her pallor; there was a look of stern inquiry in the dark eyes. For the first time in her life Elaine saw her mother's brow contract—was it a scowl?—and the lips were compressed.

"Elaine!"

The countess stood still. She did not enter the summer-house; she held her sweeping skirt over one arm; she looked straight into the summer-house, and into the pale face of her daughter.

"Elaine!"

"Yes, mother." Oh, in so faint and low a tone. Elaine saw that her mother guessed or had been told something. "What?"

"Elaine, get up."

Slowly and trembling O'Hara's wife obeyed. The countess flushed crimson to the roots of her hair as she watched Elaine; her great eyes blazed.

Elaine bent her head, then covered her face with her hands. She knew that in the sight of heaven her life was as stainless of any shame spot as was that of her child sister Clarice. She was a wife joined in holy church to a man whom she loved, but that man was the son of a peasant, and the terrible marriage would dis-

grace her even more than sin in the eyes of her countess mother.

"Elaine, I heard strange news of you last week."

"Last week! Who?—did anybody?—was it?"

"I received a letter from here posted at Dungan; it was not signed; it was in a strange writing; it told me that my eldest daughter had brought horrible shame upon her father's name. Your name was coupled with that of the Earl of Levison?"

The countess paused as if asking a question. Elaine looked down on the ground, her heart thumped against her side; the lawn and the great flower-bed, and the marble terrace, all seemed to spin round and round her. She caught at the table in the summer-house for support; she reeled and tottered, but her mother stretched out no helping hand, uttered no word of pity.

"Give an account of yourself," said the countess. "Tell me what brings you into this condition; have you become insane? I think you have," she added, with emphasis, after a pause, "and if so, you must be sent to a private asylum without delay."

"I am not mad," Elaine said, "I am—oh! secretly married, mother."

"To whom?"

"Don't ask, it is a secret; you will know—in time—" Elaine went on, speaking rapidly, and gaining a sort of hope and courage as she spoke. If only her mother could be brought for a time to believe that the Earl of Levison was the bridegroom, not Roland O'Hara, then time might be gained and she might escape.

"Until you confess everything to me, you are no daughter of mine—indeed, from this day forth, I reckon you as a stranger!"

"Oh! mother," said Elaine, with a sob.

"As a stranger!" said Lady Donnamore, coldly, ignoring the anguish in her child's tone. "Listen, Elaine, you will return to the house with me, and outwardly our relations may remain the same, but in private, understand, we are utter and complete strangers. The Earl of Levison must acknowledge this marriage or you shall enter an asylum for the insane. My measures are always prompt and decided, you know that."

"And I must get away," said Elaine, to herself. "Anywhere—anywhere out of the world."

Mother and daughter walked up to the house calm and even smiling, as though nothing were the matter, and the innocent Clarice was clasped in the arms of the countess, and the whole party sat down to luneh.

That very evening arrived a bevy of gay visitors—the Lady Julia Saville, Captain Fitz-Stephens, this time with his wife and infant son, and a number of servants, also a young Lord Aberdare and his sister, Lady Jane Penrith, a tall, fair, freckled, Scotch girl. Besides these a Col. Blandford and a Major Fitzroy, officers on leave for a month. So it fell out that Donnamore Castle was the gayest of the gay; every day a fête, every night a dance. Elaine was reported ill with a cold, and was kept a close prisoner in a suite of three rooms.

"I will escape—I will escape," she said to herself, restlessly night and day. "I will escape, and Mattelle must help me."

Christine watched the countess and rejoiced over her and divined the torture that was wringing her proud heart. As yet Lady Donnamore had spoken no single word to a person save only Elaine, touching the painful secret. Elaine was not allowed to see Clarice; she saw only Christine, her maid, and now and then the countess. A week passed. Was the countess corresponding with Levison? If so, what would he think?—he whom Elaine supposed knew nothing.

One morning Elaine awoke, a noise had awakened her—the sound of many voices, the tread of many feet. Was that the wind, or the roar of five thousand men? Hastily she slipped on a loose robe and ran to the window. Heavens! what a sight under the morning sky. A sea of upturned faces—men, men, men everywhere in the park and grounds of Donna-

more; men on the terraces; men swarming like locusts; a great savage human crowd, armed yet ragged, terrible in its hunger and its wrath. The Fenians—two thousand strong—about to storm and sack Donnamore.

Elaine looked again and saw Roland, her husband, standing on the terrace, white, stern, fierce, waving his cap, bounding the others on to the attack.

CHAPTER XIX.

Mad dogs let loose upon the crowd!

WERE there a thousand men or two thousand, or more or less swarming on the terraces and lawns, and in the park of Donnamore? Elaine said to herself, "There are five thousand."

In reality there were not above fifteen hundred men in all in sight of the Donnamore windows on that crisp, bright frosty morning in early November.

Roland gesticulating right in front of the entrance! Not Roland as he had pictured himself in the imaginative dreams of the past months, a gallant young soldier erect and jubilant, dressed in the silver and green uniform which had at one time been designed for the "liberators"—no, Roland, shabby, almost in rags, thin, haggard, wild-eyed, yet full of fire and eloquence, brave as a lion.

"But towards me," said Lady Elaine to herself, "cruel as the grave."

Did he see the form of his fair wife in her large white wrapper, her pale face, her lovely eyes distended with fear and agony—fears for him, true heart, not for herself? If he could only have known! But he knew not.

There was uproar and terror amongst the inmates of the castle.

The gentlemen present, most of whom were in their own rooms when the castle was surrounded, hurried on their clothes and joined together and called the men-servants and demanded whatever arms the house contained. There were pistols and guns and a revolver in a large room on the ground floor, called the gun room. There was powder and shot in plenty. There were ten strong men-servants, and five or six male guests—soldiers most of them.

They resolved on hasty and decided measures: to stand at all the windows by which entrance could by any means be effected, and to shoot dead every man who attempted to cross the threshold.

Lady Julia Saville, from whose loud and boisterous and masculine conduct in ordinary life, at least courage in the hour of danger might have been expected, was panic-struck from the very first moment when she saw and heard the yelling, savage crowd in the grounds. She had a Swiss maid, called Pamette, whom she was accustomed systematically to bully and insult; she called her to her side.

"Dress me," she said; "disguise me, and let me get out of this horrible place. I have felt something dreadful would happen in this detestable Ireland; I know that I shall be murdered! Pack up my jewels, Pamette. What an oaf and idiot you are! Lace up my boots; give me a warm dress—anything—quick—I am fainting. Yes, go and ask the housekeeper for brandy, or I shall die. And my writing-desk, Pamette. I have a cheque there for two hundred pounds, and fifty pounds in notes and gold. Sew all the money and jewels into a dress bodice and pack my satin dresses in that trunk—my velvet one with the silks in this one. What an idiot you are! how fearfully slow! You want to be goaded with a needle like an obstinate mule. I only wish there was no law; how I would beat half the dolts I know!"

Gentle Lady Julia drove her maid about thus with half-a-dozen orders in one breath, while the other ladies of the household were dressing themselves hastily and asking one another what could possibly be done.

Elaine called nobody; she dressed herself with neatness and care, bathed her face, and bound up her hair, while all the uproar within

and without increased. Then she stole out of the room, and along the corridor to the chamber-door of Christine Mattelle. She rapped on it loudly.

In a moment Christine opened it. Elaine started back in amaze when she saw her governess, Christine, was dressed in black; not an atom of colour, not a streak of white in her whole attire. Her dark hair was polished by brushing, and wound in a great knot at the back of her head; round her throat was a black lace ruff. She was white; her eyes gleamed with fire. There was a wild, strange triumph on her face.

"It has come!" she said to herself; "some or part or all of the punishment that is due to my two enemies; death and destruction are at their gates! This proud castle shall be sacked and burnt to the ground. Before this time tomorrow night electric wires shall flash the news from one end of England to the other, that murder and pillage have made a wild story in the fair county of Wicklow. Ha! the time is come!"

Thus she thought. She frowned when she saw fair, golden-haired Elaine.

"This child shall be saved from violence," said the Frenchwoman to herself, "if I die to save her." Christine was capable of heroism; she had the courage of a lioness. She still frowned; she scowled in fact, and her black brows met. She clutched the shoulder of Elaine. "You shan't run into danger, nor that silly little coward Clarice, who is crying in the inner room. I will hide you and help you to escape if they only pillage the castle. If they mean to burn us out we must get you away at once. Don't be afraid."

"I am not afraid," said Lady Elaine, speaking with a strange light in her eyes and a trembling of her whole frame, which did not escape the observation of Christine. "I fear only for Roland O'Hara; he is on the terrace shouting and leading on the men to this attack, and he—they will shoot him dead perhaps. I am thinking of him."

"He is an idiot to expose his life—an idiot," cried Christine. "He and you must meet, child, and you must tell him that you love him; that you wish to be his faithful wife. He must not go on deluding himself with this horrible idea that you wish him dead; that is what makes the young idiot so mad and so reckless. Come with me."

Christine laid her hand on Elaine's shoulder and hurried her along the corridor. At the head of the grand staircase they were met by Captain Fitz-Stephens and Colonel Blandford, an imposing-looking man and brave soldier, who had distinguished himself in the Crimea, and was one of the most collected and calmly courageous of all the guests assembled at fated Donnamore.

"You ladies," he said, courteously but hurriedly to Mademoiselle Mattelle, "must all be placed together in one suite of rooms, and you must not come out until we tell you it is safe. Depend upon it no harm will happen to any of you if we can prevent—"

The colonel's speech was cut short by the loud, hysterical cries of Lady Julia Saville, whose door opened upon that part of the corridor. She rushed out of the room in her peignoir of crimson quilted satin, her hair unbound, and partly streaming on her shoulders. She was followed by the frightened-looking Swiss maid Pamette, carrying the jewel-box and the writing case which contained her money.

Lady Julia was very pale indeed. She looked sallow and unlovely just then, for she had partaken of lobster salad and champagne the previous night, followed, as Pamette could have testified, by stronger stimulants in her own apartments. She had been awakened suddenly from her sleep by the yells of the rioters outside, and she had not even taken her bath. She was bilious—alarmed—in a fearful state of rage and spite with all the world. She looked haggard and ten years older than Fitz-Stephens had ever seen her look in all his life before, and his allegiance towards this cowardly lady, whose

daring rudeness and brutal selfishness he had been silly enough to mistake for courage, tottered on its throne. He thought of his honest little plump wife, busy and brave as he had just left her dressing her little two years old son herself, assuring the careless husband, whose love she had never doubted, "that she was not an atom afraid," and he said to himself:

"I have wronged Suzette when I have called her selfish and stupid. Upon my soul, her round, rosy, good-tempered face is pleasanter in time of trouble than this virago's!"

"Save me, James! put me somewhere. I know they will murder us all. Pamette is such a donkey she has not put up half my things. Colonel Blandford, will you tell me where to go? Can we get out of the castle and take refuge in one of the farms? Can't you send me in a carriage to Dungan with my luggage, and Pamette and I will take the train for Dublin and never set foot again in this island of savages."

Something in Fitz-Stephens' manner chilled Lady Julia, so she actually turned for sympathy to the middle-aged colonel.

"It would be quite impossible to send you and your luggage on to Dungan, Lady Julia, in a carriage, because the rioters are now in the stables helping themselves to the horses and the carriages. The attack has been so very secret and so sudden, three or four thousand men must have been concealed in the woods on the right side of Carrig Flyn for some days. Of course the peasantry have managed to take them food, for which the rebels paid. We don't know how many more may be marching upon us. Nothing but a regiment or two of soldiers could put them to flight. The telegraph wires between this and Dungan have been cut, as one of the men servants has just told me, he knew that last night, and it is said that the railway station and all the line are in possession of the Fenians, but I do not believe that."

Lady Julia gave utterance to a hideously piercing shriek; the yells of the rebels outside rose at that moment to a fearful pitch, and the din was terrific.

"Mademoiselle," said the colonel, hurriedly appealing to Christine, "we are in danger; the house is quite surrounded, escape just now is impossible, and the ruffians have plenty of firearms. We will barricade the doors and windows, indeed that is what the men are doing now, but the ladies must be together and quiet. Do find a suite of rooms; we will send the maids with breakfasts and fuel, but they must be locked in; help me, will you?" and he put his hands to his ears, Lady Julia having set up a deafening yell.

Christine Mattelle was happier in that moment than she had ever been since the days when she had sat under the trees in Donnamore Park with James Fitz-Stephens, and he had asked her to become his wife, the future Countess of Donnamore. Happy! she seemed to tread on air. Danger was as the very breath of her nostrils to this Frenchwoman, who lived only in an atmosphere of strong passions, be it love or hate, or ambition or revenge.

How for more than ten long years she could have chained down her rebellious, fiery spirit, to play the tame, curbed part of governess to two young girls is one of the mysteries which can never be cleared up.

Danger! Would the proud castle be sacked? or would it be burnt to the ground? Either or all, so that the two women who had tortured and wrung her heart were but punished.

"My hour is come," said Christine, to herself, and her smile was for the moment terrible.

(To be Continued.)

HARDENING CHILDREN.

ONE of the most painful features observable during the present season is the multitude of barefooted or thinly-clad children to be met with in our large towns, particularly in the North. In some cases poverty may doubtless be

pleaded in extenuation for this practice, but in others no valid excuse can be offered. There are parents who ignorantly pride themselves on their contempt for sentiment, and treat their children with almost Spartan severity, allowing them to run about with head and feet thus uncovered, or insufficiently protected from the weather, with the vain notion of "hardening" them, the natural consequence being catarrh, bronchitis, phthisis, and a culpable because preventable increase of infant mortality.

It is well known that the Scotch are especially noted for their disregard of clothing the lower extremities. Many persons fail to recognise the fact that children are not all blessed with similar constitutions; some of robust frame are able to brave all variations of temperature with comparative impunity, whilst the weakly speedily succumb under the trial. Nor is this evil confined to the poor; the middle and upper classes at this holiday season frequently err by the pernicious custom of clothing their children for evening parties in gossamer dresses, thin shoes, and socks instead of warm stockings.

A little reflection on these points should teach parents that attention to the dictates of common sense, if not of humanity, may possibly prevent much future anxiety to themselves and suffering to their offspring.

WHY SHOULD WE WORRY.

Why should we worry? This life is not long enough

Here to be wasted in sighing and tears; Silly and childish is he who's not strong enough

Wise with reason to fight away tears, Care's but coward, with courage not half enough

Fairly to face us if we show no fears, Nay, if it pester you, you've but to laugh enough.

Presto, begone! lo, the bore is not here.

Mem'ry too often will bring us old sorrows; When they were borne did we wish them to last?

Why not forget them? the fool alone borrows

Present regrets from the griefs of the past.

Can we now change it by weeping and whining?

What's done is done, and is gone past recall;

He who the present forgets in repining Useless and vain, is the worst fool of all.

Fancy, the jade, will too often be peering, Curious and scared through the future's dark night;

Why should we tremble at what she is fearing?

Why should her dreaming fill us with affright?

Wait till they're real things and present before us;

If they are worth it we'll care for them then;

Now they're but shadows, too flimsy to bore us,

Far too unreal to shake those who are men.

True, with the present real griefs to be dealing,

That's not so easy, we sadly must own; Who can deny flesh and blood will have feeling,

Care, grief and anguish will make them-selves known?

Own it, but add, life is too short for worry; Darkness brings sunshine, or all men are wrong:

Off with despairing—don't be in a hurry To know grief is pressing—it will not stay long. R. H.

COLD WATER IN COLD WEATHER.

It should not be forgotten that the sole use of cold water in cold weather is to stimulate the organism to increased activity. A great mistake is made when any part of the body is immersed in cold water, and left to part with its heat without any guarantee that the energy of heat-production so severely taxed can respond to the requirement. It may easily happen that the internal calorific force—if we are at liberty to use that expression—will be exhausted; and if that occurs harm has been done.

The obvious principle of health preservation is to maintain the circulation in its integrity; and while the error of supposing that clothing can do more than keep in the heat generated within is avoided, it is not less needful to guard against the evil of depriving the body of the heat it has produced. The furnace should be well supplied with suitable fuel—that is, nutritious food; the machinery of heat production, which takes place throughout the organism, not in any one spot or centre, should be kept in working order, and nothing conduces to this end more directly than the free use of the cold douche and the shower-bath; but the exhibition of these popular appliances in all or any of their forms, ought to be restricted to a few seconds of time, and unless the evidences of stimulation—redness, and streaming of the surface—are rapidly produced, the affusion should be laid aside.

The use of cold water in cold weather is a practice which must be governed by rules special to each individual case; and it is with a view to warn the public against the recourse to general recommendations we allude to the subject. Whether the practice recommended be that of plunging the feet in cold water before going to bed, to procure sleep—a reckless prescription, founded on physiological fallacy—or any other use of cold water, the only safe course is to seek the counsel of a medical man conversant with the patient's peculiarities; and particularly in the cases of children we urge that this precaution should be observed.

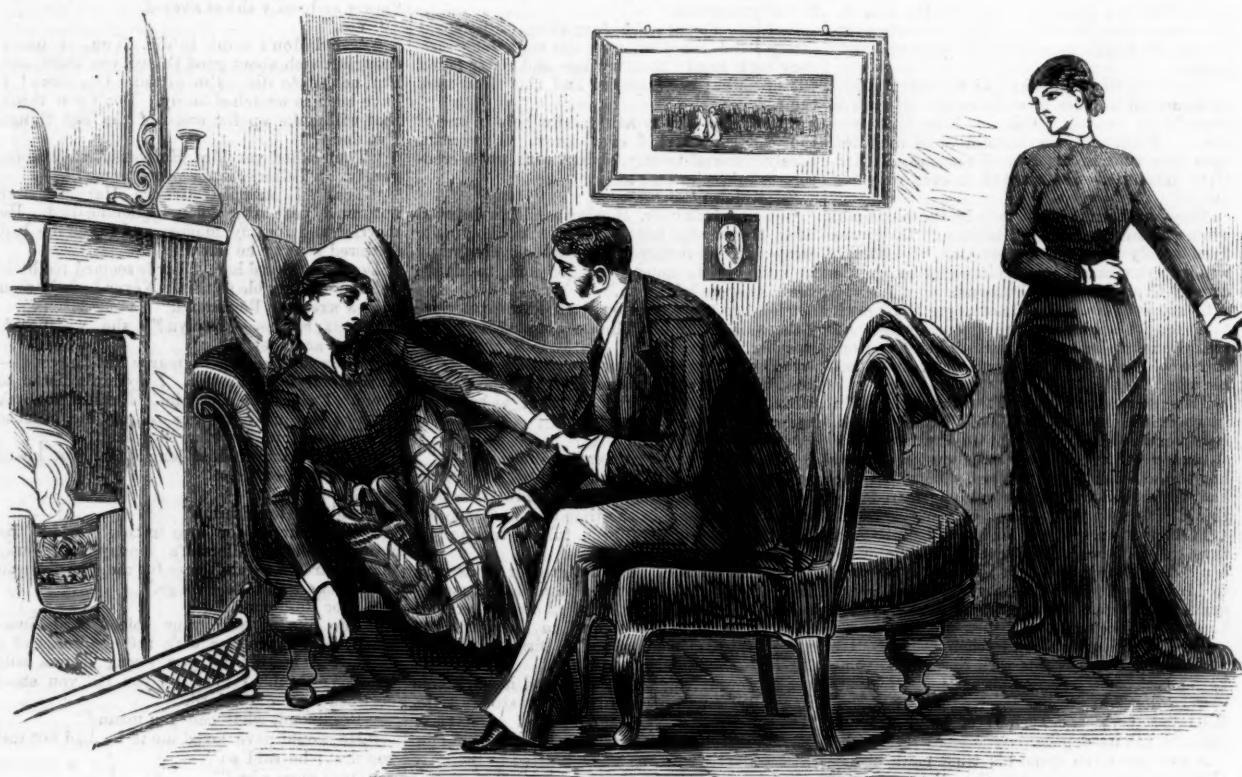
THE ANTIQUITY OF WEAVING.

THE earliest records of the art of weaving are to be found in the Old Testament. Pharaoh arrayed Joseph in "vestures of fine linen," and Job lamented that his days were swifter than the weaver's shuttle, the use of the simile proving that the shuttle was a common and well known object at the time. Portions of woven cloth and a weaver's shuttle have been found among the remains of the Lake dwellings, and as the latter are believed to belong to the stone age, the origin of the art may possibly have been nearly coincident with the existence of man.

Few if any savage races have been discovered altogether ignorant of the art, and many of them have brought it to a considerable degree of perfection; while the relics of the ancient Peruvians and Egyptians show that they were skilled weavers. Some fragments of Egyptian cloth were found on examination to be woven with threads of about 100 hanks to the pound, with 140 threads to the inch in the warp, and 64 in the woof. Although the art was practised extensively, and with no mean skill, in very ancient times, it progressed slowly and gradually—by small steps at long intervals. The great advances in the art of weaving have been made during the past 300 years, mainly during the past century.

CREMATION.—At Lebanon, Madison Co., the Dairy Company possesses twenty-four factories or creameries and some 10,000 to 11,000 cows.

It is said that the Government intend calling upon Parliament to vote a million for special Roman Catholic University education. The money, it is proposed, shall be voted from the Irish Church surplus



[A BREAK IN THE CLOUDS.]

STRONG TEMPTATION: A Tale of Two Sinners.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"That Young Person," "Why She Forsook
Him," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SUMMER IDLING.

And what is friendship but a name,
A charm that lulls to sleep.

THAT same July day, a little earlier than evensong at St. Martin's, a fashionably-dressed man stood on Signor Gabrielle's doorstep eagerly awaiting admittance.

Vere Eastcourt handed his card to a page, and said:

"Ask your master to give me Madame Harold's address if he is too busy to see me."

The page, being dull of hearing or naturally stupid, gave his master the card with the information that a gentleman had come from Madame Harold. Vere Eastcourt was ushered into the musician's study at once.

"You come from Madame Harold?" began the foreigner, joyously. "I hope you are here to tell me she has changed her determination of this morning?"

"There is some mistake," said Vere, simply. "My sole object in troubling you is to ask for Madame Harold's address. I heard her sing last night, and I discovered she was an old friend of mine whom I had been seeking for months."

A cloud of disappointment darkened the Italian's face.

"I am sorry that I cannot help you. Madame Harold was here this morning to tell me that

she had sung for the last time. She was going away from London, and never meant to utter another note."

"And you have no idea where she is?"
The maestro shook his head.

"Tell me, at least, one thing. It was not her real name, Madame Harold? She was an Englishwoman?"

"She was an Englishwoman, assuredly. As for the name of Harold I am not at liberty to say."

"You must say," returned Vere. "Was not Madame Harold Mrs. Bryan Hastings?"

"You have evidently known the lady well. I will not deny the fact, only, sir, respect her secret. She was left penniless and unprotected. She has toiled nobly. If she chose to drop a name which must have had painful associations for her who can blame her?"

Not Vere, certainly. He was in no humour then to blame Dorothea. He only wanted to see her—to tell her that time, separation, and silence had been powerless to change his love.

"Have you really no clue to her address? I have sought her so long. We have been friends for years."

"If I tell you what I think you will not like it. It is only a surmise, after all."

"I should be glad if you would let me hear it."

"Then listen, sir. When a woman gives up such splendid prospects the explanation is easy. Her voice, her beauty are for the delight of one person only. Love of art is strong; only another love can conquer it. That is why Madame Harold will sing no more."

"Who is it?"

"She will be a lovely peeress, and he is a fine young man. When I see Lord Marsden at my concerts night after night—when I hear he is the only person who is allowed to visit Madame Harold—I begin to know something. A little while ago he went away; now madame gives up her profession and is tired of England. Oh, it is all very simple. There will be a ceremony at

one of the little chapels abroad, and he will give her a plain gold ring."

Vere Eastcourt shook hands with the kindly artiste and took his leave, feeling his life must be once more purposeless and aimless. As he was walking slowly down Piccadilly he thought himself he would go and call on Rosamond.

"The best-hearted little woman in the world," he thought to himself, as he knocked at the door of her elegant abode. "I wonder why the others hate her so. Even Maudie looks cold when I speak of her."

Rosamond was at home and received Vere with outspoken pleasure. She had little expected him to come, for she knew he had recognised Dorothea, and had feared he would renew his acquaintance with her and learn she was still free.

Mrs. Ellerslie put forth all her attractions to make the afternoon pass very pleasantly to Vere. He almost forgot the bitter disappointment he had received, and as he sat talking to his blue-eyed hostess the idea did come to him he might have been wiser to have married Rosamond Stuart, and driven Dorothea from him. No, Vere, a thousand times no.

Marrying one so far beneath you in heart and mind as Rosamond could never have brought you happiness. She could not have driven Dorothea from your heart. The contrast between them would only have made you regret the past much more.

Rosamond was beautiful, but a man looks for something more than beauty in a wife. She who reigns over a home should have a soul, and Rosamond was singularly defective in this particular.

In those days Vere spent much of his time with Rosamond. He took her to plays and concerts; drove with her; rode with her, and was often to be found in her drawing-room. He saw little of his sister, Maude and her husband had left town directly Parliament adjourned. Vere stayed on until London was nearly empty, then he went down to Lowestoft, and put up at the

"Royal," probably because Mrs. Ellerslie was established in a furnished house on the Parade. He never thought the light his attentions to Rosamond might assume in the eyes of other people.

After that one regret he had not married her he dismissed the idea from his mind. He never thought of becoming Colonel Ellerslie's successor. Rosamond was charming, and she filled up a little void in his life. Everyone else had other interests. She seemed to care only for him.

They had been friends only in the old time, when a nearer tie was open to them. They were friends only now when poor Colonel Ellerslie was lingering on a bed of pain under the gentle care of Evelyn and her husband.

So argued Vere. So did not argue Rosamond. She thought her happiness had come at last, and that the man she loved returned her affection, and would, when her husband died, make her wife.

There seemed to the fair, frail woman no sin in counting thus on Colonel Ellerslie's death. Rosamond's ideas of right and wrong were strangely confused. The strongest passion of her life was her love for Vere. Now that she had triumphed over her rival she feared nothing.

Perhaps it was natural for her to be mistaken thus. A wife with her husband living, Vere could do nothing but wait. It never occurred to Mrs. Ellerslie that were the colonel in his grave Mr. Eastcourt's manner to herself would be precisely the same.

They were a great boon to each other. Vere passed many happy hours with Rosamond. The better part of his nature—his strongest feelings—were dormant in his intercourse with Mrs. Ellerslie. Only the surface of his heart was touched, not its depths.

A man can often spend his time more agreeably with a woman he only likes than with the one he loves. The first can please him without the chance of paining him. The second stirs all the strongest passions of his nature, and never yet was passion all sweetness.

So they went on from day to day; Rosamond serene in her breast; Vere with his life-sorrow crushed out of sight, spending his time in pleasant idling. No idea ever came to him of what she might be thinking. Love blinded her to the fact his only feeling for her was friendship. The mistake might have gone on for months instead of weeks, only one day a letter in a deep mourning envelope came from Mrs. Ellerslie. Evelyn and her doctor husband had done all they could for their poor patient, but their task was ended. Poor Colonel Ellerslie was dead, and Rosamond was a widow.

Full eighteen months after the July evening when Bryan Hastings' widow had sought refuge at St. Martin's Sisterhood, Hubert Eardley and Sister Mary sat in eager conversation. On this occasion it was not so much the vicar of St. Martin's and the superior of the sisterhood who held converse, as the brother and sister who had played together in childhood, and had one common home and one common love.

"I think," said Hubert, thoughtfully, "no life can be complete without suffering. You had yours early, Mary; I am having mine now. Perhaps I shall be more patient with other's sorrows for having been disappointed myself."

"And you think it would be wrong," said the sister, gently. "Such a love must be ennobling. Such a wife as Dorothea could not hinder your course."

He shook his head.

"I have no right to marry. I regard the celibacy of the clergy as a duty, only if I might have made a home such as other men have, I would have chosen her for its queen, and I think I could have won her."

"If ever you had married she is in all the world the one for you."

He sighed.

"There, it is over now—one of life's might-have-beens. A white surplice cannot make a man's heart blind to beauty and goodness. For-

get my weakness, Mary. I have a great deal to talk to you about."

A little silence; the forgetting of personal things; the recollection of the work for which they both lived; then brother and sister faded out of sight; the superior and the vicar took their places.

"I came to-day to ask you for help in one of the saddest cases I ever knew. A woman, barely five-and-twenty, dying, with not a creature to take pity on her."

"A widow?"

"Worse, infinitely. Her husband has deserted her. He married her not six months ago; made away with her fortune, and now she is absolutely in want. You must send someone to-night; she cannot be left alone."

"We are very busy now," mused the superior; "there is so much illness about this bitter weather."

"You must send someone. They will have need of all their patience, for this poor Mrs. Harcourt is as suffering in mind as body. I never met such blank despair."

"I will send Dorothea."

"If anyone can bear comfort she can."

The vicar rose and took his leave, and Sister Mary went in search of her friend. Dorothea was little changed in the time that had gone by. Her face had always been full of feeling; it was so now.

The large dark eyes had a greater tenderness in their depths, the mouth a more patient sweetness. The old passion had died out of her face at seven-and-twenty. Dorothea Hastings was more beautiful than when we first saw her in Mrs. Grubbs' dreary lodgings.

She wore a long black dress, and her soft hair was coiled round her head in its old simple style. She had never adopted the dress of a Sister of Mercy. She had never taken the *vows* of one. At St. Martin's no one was admitted to the body who had not been at the sisterhood three years. Dorothea could have left the quiet white house and gone back to the world without anyone blaming her, though everybody would have regretted her.

She herself never thought of so returning. There was a wondrous peace about the life she now led which to a world-tossed soul was in itself a charm. Her mind had not grown narrow. It had enlarged, if anything. Her heart had opened to other troubles than her own.

Many interests not of self pressed on her. The good had triumphed over evil. The saint had conquered over the sinner who had once yielded to Strong Temptation.

Sister Mary told Dorothea of the necessity which had arisen, and the latter expressed her willingness to go at once to Mrs. Harcourt.

"Only twenty-five, and dying alone. No wonder everything seems a blank despair to her."

Mrs. Harcourt was in small, miserably furnished lodgings at Notting Hill. As she knocked at the door and saw the slipshod servant who answered it Dorothea's thoughts travelled back to Coldharbour Lane and the years she had spent at Mrs. Grubbs.

Dorothea opened the parlour door and walked in. A horsehair sofa had been drawn quite close to the fire, and on it lay the invalid wrapped in shawls. Dorothea went up to her and took her hand.

"Mr. Eardley sent me. I hope you will let me stay with you."

Then she stopped abruptly. Two blue eyes were looking searchingly into hers. She recognised the woman she had last seen at Vere Eastcourt's side—whom she had first seen at Château Thierry four long years ago.

"Rosamond!"

"Yes, Dora; don't glory over me. Be good to me. I have been so miserable."

Dorothea bent and kissed the pale cheek she remembered so round and rosy. Longing though she did to hear Rosamond's story, she asked no question.

"I am dying. Have they told you?" asked Rosamond, abruptly.

It was not in Dorothea's nature to deceive. Slowly and sadly she answered:

"Yes."

"And I don't want to die, Dora. I never thought much about good things, you know, and I'm not fit to die. I'm afraid. Oh, Dora! I have been so wretched lately. Don't you think that will make up for some of the bad things I've done?"

"They called you Mrs. Harcourt," said Dora, gently. "Tell me, is that your name?"

"Yes. I married George Harcourt last autumn, a year after Colonel Ellerslie died. He married me for my money, and when he had frittered it away he left me."

Dorothea kissed her. Words seemed too little before such trouble as this. Never had she seen such a wreck as Rosamond.

"Your mother—Evelyn?" she whispered. "Where are they?"

"They told me not to marry Mr. Harcourt—warned me what he was. I wouldn't listen to them. I ran away with him. I can't go back to them now and ask them to pity me, because he's turned out just what they said."

"Had you known him long? I never heard his name before."

"Six weeks."

"And you loved him?"

"Who marries for love in this world? He wanted Colonel Ellerslie's money. The only man I cared for didn't care for me, so I thought I might as well take George."

"Poor Rosamond!"

"I do like to hear your voice," said Rosamond, clinging to her with the weakness of a woman. "Dora, if I did you wrong it was only because of him. I did love you till you stood between us, I did indeed."

"Rosamond, what can you mean?"

"He would have loved me if he had not met you first; he said so."

"Once more who?"

"Vere Eastcourt!"

"You loved him?"

"Yes. Not as you love, but just as much as women like me can love. When he lost you he talked to me and took to spending a great deal of time with me, and I, poor idiot, thought he loved me. Colonel Ellerslie died, and I went home to mamma and Evelyn. For a long time I saw no one, then he came again, and I thought it was to ask me to be his wife."

Dorothea was listening with breathless attention. Rosamond went on quickly, it seemed a relief to her to pour out the whole story.

"He told me then that now I was a widow we must not be so much together, people might link our names. He said it as though it were a jest. He suspected nothing. I laughed too, for I would not have let him know the truth for worlds. He went away and I married George Harcourt."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

Common as light is love,
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.

JANUARY had faded into February, and still Rosamond Harcourt lingered. Hubert Eardley and Dorothea did all in their power for the woman who, with all her beauty, had yet made a failure of her life; but all their efforts were unavailing. No peace came to the troubled spirit, no calm to the uneasy brain. Rosamond knew the truth that she was beyond all human skill, and her whole soul was one blank despair.

She clung to Dorothea very closely as the days passed on. At first she had almost shrunk from receiving kindness at the hands of one she had done her best to injure; but soon, in her feebleness, she grew to love the calm strength of Dorothea's soul.

"I don't wonder he never cared for me after once loving you," she whispered one wintry afternoon.

"Hush, dear," said Dora, softly, "do not trouble yourself about that; Mr. Eastcourt and

I are little likely ever to cross each other's path again. I yielded to Strong Temptation; I am a sinner, for I stood at the Lord's own altar with a falsehood upon my lips."

"Then what am I?"

Dorothea was silent. She never prolonged these discussions, which always tried the invalid.

"I think," said Rosamond, looking earnestly at her friend with her large blue eyes, "that money was my bane. First I sold myself for it, then later on I was married for it. Oh, Dora! what was there in you that won hearts? Colonel Ellerslie loved me as a plaything, but no man really cared for me. I have never been the love of a man's heart."

"Believe me, Rosamond, such love brings little pleasure unless you can return it."

"But you win it. Lord Marsden would have done anything to induce you to marry him. This tall, grave clergyman who comes so often cares more for you than his own life."

"No," answered the other, firmly; "indeed, you wrong him. Mr. Eardley is far too good to care for such a one as I. As for Lord Marsden, he is my dear friend, and if he came back to England I should be only too glad to receive him as such."

"Put on your bonnet now," said Rosamond, authoritatively. "Mr. Eardley is coming this afternoon, so I can spare you quite well. I know you are longing to go and see that Sister Mary you talk of so much."

When Dorothea was ready the invalid called her back.

"Tell me just one thing before you go. How do I look?"

"Very ill, dear."

"Yes, but has illness changed me, Dora? Do you think there is anything about my face to shock anyone?"

Left alone, Rosamond's eyes turned impatiently to the clock on the mantelpiece. Two days before she had written a letter unknown to her faithful nurse. It was to be alone when the answer came that she had sent Dora out. The clock struck four and the invalid's heart beat quicker with expectation. Presently a knock came at the street door, and then the little servant showed into the homely parlour a man of aristocratic bearing, who had sorrowful surprise written on his face as he gazed on Mrs. Harcourt.

"Rosamond, is it possible?"

"Yes," a faint smile coming to her wan face. "I do not wonder you are surprised."

"I did not expect to find you so ill."

"I am more than ill, Vere. I am dying."

"Dying! and barely twenty-five. Rose, it is impossible!"

"No, Vere, it is the truth. I have struggled hard before I would believe it. I sent for you for your own sake, Vere, not for mine."

"For my sake!"

"Yes. I want to tell you something; sit down by the sofa, please, and take my hand in yours. Turn your face so that you can't see mine while I am speaking, and, Vere, promise you'll forgive me."

"My dear Rosamond," said Vere, gravely; "indeed I have nothing to forgive you; you were—you are a dear friend."

He took her hand and placed himself as she wished, and Rosamond began. She told her story very simply, and no lengthy words could have been more forcible than the plain unvarnished facts.

Vere listened in amazement. Shocked, grieved as he was at her duplicity, he never shrank from her. His heart was too good to forget her great excuse—that she was dying and that she had sinned for love of him.

"Then, Rosamond, you mean Mrs. Hastings and Lord Marsden were only friends?"

"Never anything else. Oh, Vere, can you forgive me?"

"Yes; but, oh, Rosamond, you have brought years of sorrow on us both."

"Dora does not look sorry," said Rosamond, musingly. "Oh, Vere, what a relief it is to have told you. I think I feel happier than I have done for years."

The door opened softly and Dorothea entered. No one had told her of the stranger's arrival, and in the dusky firelight—it was one of Rosamond's fancies to have the room always darkened—she did not see the figure at Rosamond's side. She came straight up to the sofa, and then she started.

Rosamond took Dora's hand and put it into Vere's, holding them both in her thin, white ones.

"You will be happy yet. Oh, don't think unkindly of me when I am dead. Indeed, I have suffered cruelly. I have never been happy since I parted you!"

The other two—the two for whom life had never held anything dearer than the other—put all thought of self from them, and thought only of her.

"We will never think anything but what is kind of you, Rose," whispered Dorothea, forgetting all the "we" implied.

"And you won't leave me, Dora? It won't be for long."

"I will never leave you, dear."

"I am very tired," said Rosamond, faintly, "and it is so dark. Do let me have a light. I can't see you."

Dorothea ignited the gas, then she went back to the sofa, and knelt down by Rosamond. Vere stood looking on the scene with very mingled feelings.

Happy though he was to have refound the woman he loved, his heart was full of pity for the woman who had loved him. He was questioning himself very hardly whether he was to blame for Rosamond's infatuation.

"I feel quite happy," said Rosamond, presently. "If you two, whom I have injured most of all, can forgive me, I don't think Heaven will be harder."

Dorothea was quietly crying. There was something in these words to her inexplicably sad. Rosamond went on, slowly:

"When I first saw you, Dora, I thought I should like you to be near me in trouble. Well, I have just the same feeling now, and you will be near me in the last trouble I shall ever know."

The blue eyes turned to Vere in one long, lingering glance; then she said to Dora:

"Tell me something of where I am going; not the sad, gloomy part, but after. Somehow I am not afraid now. I think there will be room in Heaven even for me. I have sufferings that will blot out my sin. Vere, hold my hand closer, and when it's all over kiss me just once. I shall feel the touch of your lips even though I am dead."

Dorothea felt incapable of her words: in her rich, sweet voice she began a well known hymn. She never ended it. Before she reached the last verse, "life's long shadows" had indeed broken for Rosamond. Her head lay heavy on Dorothea's arm, her eyes had ceased to look at Vere.

He bent down and fulfilled her last wish. His lips touched her forehead, and it seemed to Dorothea's fancy a faint smile came to her face as he did so. Then, his voice broken by a sob, he turned to Vere:

"It is finished, my darling. Mine at last and for ever!"

And here with the death of one of the two sinners my story ought properly to end, but I add a few words to tell the fate of some of those who have figured in its pages.

Vere Eastcourt and Dorothea were married one bright spring morning at Easter tide, and Hubert Eardley's voice spoke the words which gave the woman, who had come to him in bitter sorrow, into another's keeping.

He it was who had persuaded Dora of what she had almost doubted, that she was free to return to a secular life. No vows had bound her, and yet it seemed to her almost a breach of faith to leave the sisterhood. Hubert overcame her scruples.

"A woman's rightful place," he told her, "is with the man she loves;" and save the gentle superior of St. Martin's sisterhood, no one knew of the deep love the vicar had crushed; none

knew the pain he stifled as he married Dorothea Hastings to Vere Eastcourt.

It was a very quiet wedding. Cecil Kyrle gave away the bride, and Lord Marsden was among the few spectators. Before the ceremony, Dorothea had formally signed away her rights to Lakewood in favour of her cousin Cecil. She wished to possess nothing in the world that did not come to her from her husband.

They live at Eastcourt now. Vere and his wife. He loves her just as he did years ago when she was a light-hearted girl, and to her he is dearer than all else; but in their happiness they do not forget the long years of their separation. Never can Dora forget the sin and suffering, the heavy repentance, the bitter heartache, which followed her yielding to STRONG TEMPTATION.

[THE END.]

THE BEST THING A BOY CAN

H A V E.

"THERE, mother! I've worked the last day. I'm going to work for Mr. Belnap! He's the crossest, hatefulest man that ever lived! Just because—"

Mrs. Barry lifted her eyes from the cap that was lying at her feet to the flushed and heated face of the speaker.

"That will do, my son. If you have concluded not to work any more for Mr. Belnap pick up your cap and put it where it belongs."

That low, even tone and quiet manner, had a visible effect upon Arthur.

Picking up his cap he hung it upon its nail back of the door.

Full of his real or imaginary wrongs he commenced again, though in a more subdued tone and manner.

"You see, mother—"

"Before you say anything further get me a pitcher of cool water; and while you are at the pump dash some of it over your face, head and neck; you don't know how much better it will make you feel."

Mrs. Barry had trained her children to prompt and unquestioning obedience, thereby saving herself and them a great deal of trouble; and without a thought of doing otherwise, Arthur took the pitcher and went to the pump, out of which, in spite of its plug, the sparkling water dripped all the day long.

Holding his head under the cool refreshing stream for some minutes he gave the brown curls a shake that sent the drops flying in every direction.

Then filling the pitcher he went in.

It was a maxim of Mrs. Barry's that if she wanted her children to be gentle and polite she must be gentle and polite with them; so she took the glass of water from Arthur's hand with just as pleasant a thank you as if she had been some other woman's boy.

Then she drew forward a chair, which mute invitation Arthur accepted.

"Now I want to tell you about it, mother, and I'm sure you won't blame me at all. I was a little bit late this morning, and old Belnap—"

"Who?"

"That's what the boys call him, mother."

"I'm very sorry. I hope that my son, who has been better taught, will set them a better example. I suppose they don't speak of him in that way when he is where he can hear them?"

"Oh! no; they wouldn't dare to!"

"And yet they are so mean and cowardly as to call him so behind his back!"

Now Arthur had thought this wonderfully smart in Will Guernsey and John Dill, who were in the habit of speaking of their employer, among themselves, as "Old Belnap," or "the old man;" but he was a manly little fellow, despising anything mean or cowardly, and his

mother's words gave quite another complexion to it.

"Well, Mr. Belnap, then. He was as cross as a bear, just because I was a little bit late. Said that boys who wanted to work for him must be punctual. And then, when a case of goods came, and he couldn't find the hammer, he charged me with mislaying it. And when I said I hadn't touched it, he said he knew better. And there it was, all the time, right under the desk, where he put it himself!"

"It is a great misfortune to be so forgetful."

"But he needn't have been so cross about it."

"It is a greater misfortune to have a hasty temper. Perhaps he was never taught to control it when a boy."

"I don't care! I think it's real mean for Mr. Belnap to treat me so! Don't you, mother?"

"I think you have not told things exactly as they were."

"Why, mother?"

"Not intentionally, my son; I should be very sorry to believe such a thing of you as that. But there are various ways by which people form the habit of speaking untruthfully, and one of these is by exaggerating. Don't you remember my showing you an instrument, looking through one end of which made everything seem twice as large, and through the other they looked so small that you could scarcely see them at all? Now, we have just such an instrument as that in our own minds. We look through the large end at the faults of other people, making them seem twice as large as they are, and through the small end at our own, making them look so small that, very often, we can't see them at all. Now I'm afraid that this is the way you have been doing by Mr. Belnap."

"I'm almost sure, mother, that I haven't said the least bit of anything that is not true about him!"

"Let us see. In the first place, you said 'that he was the crossest and hatefulest man that ever lived.' Now, even could you have known all the cross, disagreeable people that ever existed, is that true?"

Arthur made no reply, and Mrs. Barry continued:

"Don't you remember how kind he was to the Widow Connor? How he let Joe's wages go on last winter, when he was sick, besides sending his own doctor to attend him? And when little Mary died, who sent us the flowers that made her look so sweet and lovely in her coffin, and spoke such kind, comforting words to us?"

Arthur had been tenderly attached to his baby sister, and his face looked very sober as he said:

"I don't think I meant exactly what I said about his being so cross. But all the rest was true."

"Let us see again. You said you were a little bit late. Now, when you went to work for Mr. Belnap, you agreed to be at the warehouse at eight o'clock every morning. It was twenty minutes past eight when you left here; it could not take you less than ten minutes to reach the warehouse; so you must have been all of half an hour too late."

"Half an hour isn't a great while, mother."

"But supposing all the people in Mr. Belnap's employ were half an hour late? It would amount to all of a day, if not more. And then this half hour was not yours; it belonged to your employer. He paid you for it; and it was as much as his the goods in his warehouse. If you had risen when I called you, you would have got there in time, and Mr. Belnap would have had no occasion to feel so much out of patience with you."

There was a pause of some moments, which was broken by Arthur.

"Have I got to go back there again, mother?"

"Not unless you choose. You are now old enough to reason, and, in some respects, to decide for yourself. But remember, if you go to school next winter, you will have to work for someone, and I don't believe that you will

find anybody to do better by you than Mr. Belnap."

"I hate to; I told Will Guernsey and John Dill that I wasn't going back there any more."

"If you think that was a wise thing for you to say, of course you won't go back there any more. But if you think it a hasty and foolish speech, it will make you more careful what you say another time."

"Don't you care, mother?"

"I care to have my boy do what is right. I care more for that than for anything in the wide world; but I don't like to compel him, now that he is old enough to compel himself."

As well as Arthur liked his own way, he did not care to assume the responsibility that went with it.

"But I wish you would tell me what to do?"

"I will tell you what I would do, if I were in your place. I would go to the warehouse tomorrow at half-past seven. When Mr. Belnap comes in I would say: 'Mr. Belnap, I came half an hour earlier this morning to make up for being so late yesterday, and I mean to be more punctual in future.' This is the course that I would like to have you take, my son; and I don't believe you will be sorry for it, either. But you must do it freely, and of your own accord."

Here the mother and son were interrupted.

The next noon Arthur came home quite as excited as he was the day before, but with a very different look upon his face.

"Oh! mother, I did as you advised me, and what do you think Mr. Belnap said? He said that I was a good, honest boy, and that he would raise my pay, next month, by 4s. a week... I was ashamed enough, and told him that it wasn't my idea at all, it was yours. Then he said: 'A good, amiable mother, like yours, is the very best thing a boy can have.' And oh! I do think that I've got just the best and dearest mother in the world!"

M. G. H.

THE BARONESS OF THE ISLES.

CHAPTER XXX.

MATILDA's disappearance from the priory garden had been discovered within half an hour after her abduction.

A nun had been sent by the prioress to summon the novice to the refectory, and after a thorough search in every nook and corner the nun had rushed into the presence of the Lady Superior with the tidings that Matilda was nowhere to be found.

A general alarm instantly prevailed.

The Baroness of the Isles knew how thoroughly unscrupulous was King Reginald—that even a nun in her cloister was not safe from his sacrilegious hands—and in her own soul she accused him upon the instant of having instigated the abduction of the Lady Matilda.

She ordered the alarm-bell to be rung, then opened the great house record and began slowly to read the names of her dependents.

Torchlights flared in the great courtyard, and the lurid glare fell on each face as the servant called stepped forth from the throng and answered:

"Here!"

Only one person was missing from the ranks. That person was Walters.

The prioress closed the book. The traitor was discovered. And now she remembered that Walters was said to have been in the king's service of late.

The man had been faithful during seven years' labour at the priory, and she had trusted him, and even now could scarcely comprehend his baseness and treachery.

"Let search be made in the wood," she commanded. "To horse, half-a-dozen of you!"

When the six men had departed the prioress summoned three more, ordering them also to mount.

One of these she despatched to Castle Rushen to spy upon the king. Another she despatched to the farmhouse of Walters' parents for news of him.

The third she sent in haste to Rushen Abbey to state the case to the venerable abbot, and implore his counsel and assistance.

Then, as nothing more remained to be done, the prioress possessed her soul in patience and retired to the chapel for prayer.

Of all her messengers the one whom she sent to Rushen Abbey alone demands our attention.

The man arrived upon his jaded horse soon after daybreak at the convent of St. Mary's. He sent in his credentials, and was ushered into the abbot's very presence.

There was nothing in the fact that these monks were in attendance upon the abbot that we should lay such stress upon it. But—and here is the point of interest—one of these monks was Ivar.

The messenger came in, all splashed and disordered, and approached the abbot with a low reverence.

"You bring news from the priory?" asked the abbot.

"Aye, my lord. The young nun, Sister Mary, has been carried away by force from the priory only last evening at dusk by King Reginald's own men. And the most noble the Baroness of the Isles prays that you, my lord, will give her counsel as to her action under this great outrage."

"A nun abducted by the king!" cried the abbot in amazement. "It is impossible! Surely, not even King Reginald, in his maddest moments, could be guilty of such a sacrilegious act!"

"Yet it is true, my lord," said the messenger.

"How hath the king seen a nun in her cloister to conceive a passion for her?" demanded the abbot.

"My lord," explained the messenger, "he knew her long before she entered the nunnery. He persecuted her with his love. He desired to make her his queen. Partly to escape him, and partly because her lover was dead, she entered the cloister. But even her holy vows could not daunt his majesty, and he has stolen her by violence and carried her—none knows whither."

"To his own royal castle, I doubt not," said the abbot. "If he hath stolen her, he will keep her under his own eye. Who and what was she who won the king's heart, and for love of whom he hath committed this most awful sacrilege?"

"She was a lady of birth and fortune," answered the messenger, "the daughter of the noble knight Godred; and her name was the Lady Matilda."

A great cry came from the monk nearest the abbot.

"Who did you say she had been?" demanded the Lord of the Isles, who had known thoroughly Ivar's love story and who, absorbed in his monastic life, had believed Matilda dead.

The messenger repeated his statement.

Then, Ivar, all excitement, plied the man with questions.

And as the answers came, Ivar's doubts were resolved into one great and glorious certainty. Matilda lived?

The abbot dismissed the messenger to the convent kitchen, promising to see him again when he should have been fed and rested, dismissed also two of the monks, and then found himself alone with Ivar.

Our hero was pacing back and forth in his monkish gown in a great and fearful agitation. The abbot called to him gently.

"My son," he said, "there hath been some strange mistake. The maiden whom thou hast mourned as dead is alive and in a sore strait. What are we to do?"

Ivar tore at his gown with frantic haste.

"Oh, father," he cried, "we are separated

from each other by our vows. I have been mad, I think. I am no monk at heart. I but joined the brotherhood because I believed her dead. Absolve me from my vows, good father, I beseech you. Suffer me to go to her rescue. Else will she die, and I—oh, let me go!"

He knelt at the venerable abbot's feet in wild entreaty.

Tears came into the abbot's eyes. He had been young once, and he knew how passionately young hearts throb.

"My son," he said, kindly, "my heart inclines to your prayer, although my judgment bids me remain firm. We have much authority in these days. None will rebuke me for my laxity. The church hath need of lay-workers, and it is but the few who have vocation for the cloister. I have known you from your early childhood, and have loved you as a son. King Reginald is not a true son of the church. He is a bold, bad man. I will send a letter to the Pope, requesting his holiness to absolve both you and the damsel from your religious vows. And while I await his response, well knowing what it will be, I give you back your liberty."

Ivar burst into loud expressions of gratitude.

A little later, well mounted and armed, he quitted the abbey.

He hastened towards Castle Rushen, arriving there in the course of an hour.

He was carefully disguised and did not fear to lounge about the courtyard of the castle during the day, but he failed to discover anything concerning Matilda or her enemies.

When night came on, he secreted himself within the castle walls, and after the defences had been put in order he showed himself privately to the captain of the guard, who, it will be remembered, was his friend.

The captain gave him food and drink. More, he clothed him in the garb of a soldier of the guards and placed him on patrol duty. And for hours Ivar walked to and fro before the king's door, but the monarch did not emerge from his rooms.

Confident that Matilda was within the castle, and that she was safe from her enemy during the day, Ivar slept much during the following day, but night found him again on guard, wakeful, watchful, and on the alert for any movement of the king.

But Reginald slept in peace, unconscious of the enemy at his very door.

The next day, also, Ivar spent in sleep.

Upon the third night occurred the expected crisis.

Ivar was on guard as usual. A little after midnight, the king came forth stealthily from his chamber.

Ivar, hearing him undo his bolts, dropped into a chair, and when the monarch stalked down the corridor the pretended guard seemed fast asleep.

The king paused before him, but the stertorous breathing and downcast face deceived him, and he muttered:

"The rascal! He sleeps on guard? It is well for the project I have in hand, but he is not a safe guardian of my royal slumbers, methinks, I will speak to the captain of the guard tomorrow."

He strode on. As he gained a convenient distance Ivar arose and glided after him, noiseless as a shadow.

The king and his enemy traversed various corridors to the remote and unused portions of the castle.

Then they began to descend to the dungeons.

Ivar's heart beat high and his face gleamed white and terrible through the gloom.

The king proceeded directly to the dungeon in which his captive was secreted. He had resolved to leave her to solitude for a week, but his passion for her made a further delay in seeking her presence impossible. He knocked at her door, and the old hag, knowing his signal, opened to him.

Ivar crept to the very threshold and peered within.

The door had been left ajar, Reginald not

caring to be shut within the grim vault. And so Ivar could see the maiden, as she stood up in her nun's robe, her pale face glowing with her scorn and hatred of her enemy.

How Ivar's heart bounded at the sight of her!

Repressing himself sternly, he waited.

"Beautiful Matilda," sighed the king. "Have you no words of welcome for me?"

"None!" said the girl, sternly.

"Have not imprisonment and starvation reduced your pride?" demanded the king.

Matilda made no answer.

"By our lady," said Reginald, inflamed by that sweet and glorious loveliness, "I will humble your pride; I will make you mine in spite of yourself! You shall yield me the treasures of those lips this moment, for you are mine—mine!"

He bounded towards her, seizing her in a violent embrace.

Matilda's scream rang through the vault.

The old woman ran to shut the door, but too late.

Ivar bounded in like a lion. His battle-axe was in his hand, the fires of a just and awful anger in his blazing eyes.

The axe uplifted—an appalling blow that went crashing through the monarch's skull—and Reginald fell dead at Matilda's feet.

The old woman's shrieks as she ran upward through the castle brought the guards.

Ivar was arrested and placed in a strong room.

The monarch's body was laid in state in the throne-room, but no one mourned at his death, and public sympathy was with Ivar.

The next day arrived at Castle Rushen, with a train of followers, the Lady Etheldreda, the Baroness of the Isles.

The true origin of Ivar was proclaimed, and Prince Magnus, who had been proclaimed king at Reginald's death, received our hero as his nephew, and as the rightful king.

Ivar was tried by the deemsters for regicide, and the story of his wrongs was recited. He was triumphantly acquitted.

We have been thus brief in narrating the manner of Reginald's death, since, no doubt, many of our readers are familiar with it from history.

And those learned in Manx traditions know, too, that King Magnus reigned for a brief period, Ivar refusing to take the crown from him, and upon Magnus's death Ivar succeeded to the throne.

Ivar's reign was one of the most splendid in the history of Man.

During his reign, also, the Priory of Douglas and Rushen Abbey were at the height of their glory, our grateful hero and heroine, King Ivar and the beautiful Queen Matilda, heaping upon them every temporal benefit.

[THE END.]

THE EDUCATIONAL FLIRT.

CYNICS have asked whether the ardent desire of a woman to be educated has produced that new variety of man, the educational flirt, or whether the existence of educational flirts has produced the novel wish to be educated. It is impossible to give a direct answer to this question.

Flirtation and education, the study of mathematics and political economy by ladies, the study of ladies and of their "character" by men, have advanced together. They act and react on each other; their influences cannot be disentangled.

If we are very earnest believers in the higher education of women, we may look on the educational flirt as an unconscious instrument in the spread of learning. He flits about like the bee to amuse himself and gather honey; but he scatters a good deal of learned dust as he flits. He is not always a very candid person; he may not always know his own intentions very clearly; but, on the whole, his influence is not all bad. This is not a very high compliment, to be sure, for the influence of war, pestilence, and famine

seems to many philosophers to be beneficial in the long run.

When education has become a recognised and organised thing, when all women who care for it are instructed like men, as a matter of course, the occupation of the didactic flirt will be gone. He will no longer have the charm of rarity and mystery. He will turn out to be no wiser than his brethren. He will cease to seem to possess strange secrets and hidden lore. No one will believe in him; he will be found out and will be reduced to the rank of other unprivileged men. While he is as dear to the fair as "the officers" were to Miss Austen's Liddy and Kitty, his fellow-men speak harshly of him, and "cannot see what women see in him." Soon he will have to discover some new way of being interesting, for the class of "dons of the world" has no permanent qualities. Meantime its members, if we may judge by ladies' novels, have temporarily succeeded to the old heroic hero, the brutally rude hero, the tenderly religious hero, and the ordinary pleasant young man.

One drawback in their characters is certain to prove fatal to them with the novelist. They are too apt to shake their light wings and flit on, leaving a novel and a flirtation to end not well.

MALLEABLE BRASS.—A German periodical is responsible for the following method of making malleable brass: Thirty-three parts of copper and twenty-five of zinc are alloyed, the copper being first put into the crucible, which is loosely covered. As soon as the copper is melted, zinc, purified by sulphur, is added. The alloy is then cast into moulding sand in the shape of bars, which, when still hot, will be found to be malleable and capable of being brought into any shape without showing cracks.

FRINGED WITH FIRE.

By the Author of "Bound to the Trawl," "The Golden Bowl," "Poor Loo," etc.

CHAPTER IX.

FLORENCE SEEKS CLARA'S CONFIDENCE.

Why wouldst thou urge me to confess a flame I long have stilled and would fain conceal.

WHILE matters were progressing in this fashion at Wardour Hall, Florence Edgecombe finished writing her letter to Arthur, and walked down into the town herself to post it.

Remembering she had not seen Clara Cousins for several days, she turned her steps towards the doctor's house and knocked at the door. It was opened by Clara herself, who exclaimed:

"I knew it was you! I am so glad you have come. Don't be surprised, or say a word, but come this way."

With which she led her friend upstairs to a large morning room, the wide bay window of which commanded a view of the well-kept garden, while in the room itself an old woman sat ostensibly sewing, while articles of feminine attire in various stages of completion—a sleeve in one place, a half-finished skirt in another—indicated the occupation of dress-making.

The woman who, until the entrance of the two girls, was the sole occupant of this bright, airy, sunny-looking room, was tall, thin, almost gaunt-looking, with long, bony fingers which seemed to hold the needle clumsily; a sunken, cadaverous-looking face, and big, restless eyes that were cunning, but not cruel like those of her son.

For this was Chatty Duster, the mother of that precious scamp, Dick Duster, who was now in durance vile, and unwillingly atoning by enforced "hard labour" for his cruelty to poor Jocko.

Also she was the mother of Mercy Duster, the erratic, bad-tempered, but affectionate girl who was the Edgecombe's solitary servant.

"Good morning, Chatty," said Florence, as soon as she recognised her; "I hope you are not

suffering in any way through the absence of your son; but he could not have been much of a comfort to you."

"Lord bless you, no, miss; it's a trial that I'm very glad to have, and if he'd been taken care of for six years instead of six months, I'd have been all the more happy in my mind, for it's the very mischief itself he'll be playing when once he gets free again."

"Then he'll be sure to get locked up once more."

"Yes, miss, that's all very fine, but if he's broke my head or sent you to 'Kingdom Come,' what's the good of looking him up when it's done; it won't be no satisfaction to you or to me either."

"That is true, but I suppose he would be detained for a time if anyone went before the magistrate and swore that they believed their lives to be in danger. But I could not do so, because really and truly I am not afraid of him, and as I was the instigator of the prosecution, I suppose I have the most cause for alarm."

"No, miss," replied the woman, in a slow, deliberate tone, and looking steadily at the girl; "you've no cause to be afraid of him; he'll not come a-night you. He'd never stand and look in your face and do you a wrong; but there'll be mischief done; there'll be mischief."

And involuntarily her eyes wandered in the direction of Clara, who had, at the moment, turned her head away from them.

Suddenly with the woman's glance came back to Florence the recollection of what Clara had once told her about Dick Duster trying to kiss her, and she exclaimed, unguardedly:

"Surely you cannot think so!"

But Chatty, making a gesture of warning with her hand, said quietly:

"I don't know what to think, miss; I'm afraid of him though he is my son; 'twas a black day for me when he was born."

"I say, I wish you two would talk about something more lively," interrupted Clara; "now, Chatty, put down your work and go on with my fortune. Florence is safe; perhaps she would like to have hers told when mine is finished."

But Florence shook her head at the latter part of the suggestion, as she said:

"I thought you had your fortune told several weeks ago, Clara?"

"So I had, but things change; some of it has come true, and some of it hasn't, and I want to know more. My fortune always ends just where I want it to begin."

Florence looked at the girl, and now she noticed that a restlessness had come over her that was too intense and too feverish to be natural, and a changed look had settled upon her face that added to rather than impaired its beauty, and yet gave to her features an expression of deeper thoughtfulness than they had ever possessed before—all this made Florence feel that something had occurred that was being concealed from her, but of which the influence was producing a marked and subtle change in Clara Cousins.

She glanced at Chatty; she thought of Dick Duster; her mind roved in every possible direction, trying to discover a clue to some explanation of the quiet transformation in the face and manner of her friend, but she never once thought of the true cause; never once connected Charles Rentrull in her mind with anything that could affect Clara, and no reasonable solution occurred to her to clear up the difficulty. Meanwhile Clara had carefully lifted some large pieces of silk which had been hastily thrown upon the table and disclosed underneath a number of playing cards with their faces turned upwards, arranged like a snake winding out from a small to a larger circle, every card, according to its position, colour and quality, having some deep significance.

"Now, Chatty," began Clara, "you said there was a letter on its way to me from a dark man."

"Yes; a very dark man," assented Chatty. "He must have black eyes and a dark skin and a lot of hair on his face."

"That is all right; but when is the letter coming?"

"Let me see. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. Yes. It's coming to your house. It's a love letter, but there isn't a wedding-ring in it. It's odd, but I can't see a wedding-ring anywhere about him."

"Perhaps he can't afford one," laughed Clara, uneasily.

"Oh, 'tisn't that, he's a rich man; but I don't see the ring in his thoughts. There's a fair woman he's always thinking of, and he holds the ring to her, but she turns her back on him. I don't think you'll ever get much good from that man till the fair woman is out of the way. But there's a fair man now, the King of Diamonds, he bears you a very good heart, and—"

"There, Chatty, I don't want any more rubbish," said Clara, impatiently, sweeping up the cards. "You never tell me what I want to know; and you always tell me what I don't care about. Here, Florry, will you have a try?"

But Florence shook her head with an incredulous smile, as she said:

"No, thank you; I don't believe in it."

At that instant, the movement of the handle of the door made Clara hurry the cards into her pocket, just in time to hide them from her aunt, while Chatty, with equal alacrity, picked up the work she had dropped and pretended to be sewing industriously.

Partly to cover the confusion of the other two Florence rose and advanced to meet Miss Cousins, who was a short, stout, round little woman with a superfluous amount of adipose tissue and great scarcity of breath. Coming up a flight of stairs was always enough to make her nearly speechless for some minutes, so by the time she had seated herself, gasped and fought for and finally regained her breath so as to be able to speak, Chatty was steadily working, and Clara had carefully secreted every card.

"How do you do, Florence. Come to take Clara for a walk, are you? I am very glad of it, she stays in too much, and she is safe with you, I know. Go and put on your things, child. And Mrs. Duster, I hope you are getting on with that work. It ought to be finished to-night. I must come and help you if you get on so slowly. But didn't I hear that you had got visitors, Florence?"

All this with but slight pause for breath or punctuation.

"Yes, my aunt and cousin are staying with us for a few days, but they are visiting friends of their own, this afternoon, so if Clara does not return very soon don't be alarmed about her."

"No, I shan't be, but you do keep her rather late sometimes. I am sure your father must think it a great trouble to accompany her home as he so kindly does. I was going to send up for her one night she was so late. Let me see, what night was that?"

"My father!" began Florence, her face becoming pale.

But Clara interrupted her suddenly by taking her arm and saying, impatiently:

"Come, Florence, I want to show you something." And as her aunt turned to look at some of Chatty's work at that instant the break in the conversation was complete.

Florence submitted to be led off to her friend's bedroom, but arrived there; she turned and asked, a trifle sternly:

"Clara, what does this mean? You know papa never brought you home in his life."

"Wait till we get out of the house," was the evasive reply, "and I'll tell you as much as I can and dare."

"Can and dare," thought the other.

But she waited patiently, and it was not until the two girls were walking by the river's side that the elder of them said:

"Now, Clara, what does your aunt mean by your being up at our house so late at night, and papa bringing you home. You know it isn't true."

"Of course I do," with a hot flush and some hesitation; "but the fact is, Florence," desperately, "I couldn't get out without saying I was going somewhere, so I said I was coming to see you. And when I came home somebody saw

a gentleman with me, and I said it was your father."

"And who was the gentleman?"

"I can't tell you."

Florence Edgecombe's face became grave and almost stern, while the girl by her side, watching it, grew nervous and frightened.

She knew that Florence loved her, otherwise she might have felt still more alarmed; but for all that, it was a relief when the firmly cut lips parted and their owner said:

"Clara, you are younger than I, and have had far less experience. You know so little of the world, my dear, that I tremble for you, and now you have a secret which you don't tell to your father or your aunt, or even to me, your dearest friend. No doubt you think there is something romantic in having a secret lover about whom nobody else knows anything definite; but believe me, men do not think so, because they know that secrecy means deception, with its train of shame or guilt, in some guise or other, and no man who truly loved a woman would ever expose her to the bare suspicion of falsehood or dishonour. I don't urge you to tell me anything about this man, Clara, who seems to have gained some hold upon you, lest you might think me actuated by mere idle curiosity, but tell your father, your aunt—anyone in whose judgment you have confidence, and, at any rate, hear what they have to say before you allow yourself to be induced to take some step which you can never retract."

By this time the tears were in Clara's eyes, and she said, plaintively:

"Oh, Florence, you are so good and so wise that I would tell you all in a moment if I dared, but he commanded me not to tell anyone, least of all you; and yet believe me, Florry, I have not done any wrong—not thought any wrong. I am to be his wife, but there are obstacles in the way which I don't understand. He told me that only time could remove them, and that all depended upon my silence; so now you see why I dare not speak."

"Then is the man married?" asked the older and more practical of the two girls.

"Good heavens, no! Such an idea never entered my head."

Florence shrugged her shoulders as she said:

"You see what mystery leads one to imagine, and it is possible that I might even jump at a more uncharitable conclusion than that of this man already having a wife who he hopes will soon die and leave him free to marry you."

Clara was irritated, principally because there was both possibility and probability in what her friend had said, and she now replied, bitterly:

"It's very well for you, Florence, who have had everything your own way, and never had a cross or a disappointment in your life, to be hard upon me. You have been sought after and adored, and your lover is devoted to you, and you never knew what it is to half doubt whether a man to whom you have given your whole heart really does love you half as much as you love him. If you had ever known what it is to watch and wait and hope and fear, and feel that your life is utterly worthless without the love that you crave, yet are not sure of, then you would never be so cruelly hard upon me."

"My dear Clara," and the words came back to Florence long after they were spoken, and she was thankful for having uttered them, "it is because I have suffered as I hope you will never have to do that I speak so earnestly to you now."

"Ah!" exclaimed Clara, her eyes brightening; "then you have a secret, also?"

"No," was the reply. "It was no secret, for our engagement was known to my father, though his permission was not asked, for the man was poor, and we knew we should have to wait for years before we could be married; but how I loved that man! Good heavens! as I think of it I feel as though I could tear my very heart out for having made such an idol of a thing so sordid, so base, so unutterably mean! Loved him! Ay, I have counted the hours and waited and watched with palpitating heart, and hands that grew hot and cold with alternate hope and

fear, thinking he might fail to come, as he but too often did. And his letters! I have grown sick and faint as the postman passed the house bringing no message of love or comfort for me. You think I do not know what suffering is, Clara. I have drained the bitter cup to the very dregs. I have known what it is to love a man whom I despised—to despise myself for loving him, and yet to be unable to break the spell that bound me. Yes, I have gone through it all, and I devoutly thank Him that I can never again suffer the acute anguish and misery, or taste the mad, fevered joy that I sometimes did, but that was as false and hollow as the heart of the man who inspired it."

"Why, what did he do?" asked Clara, curiously. "You said you were engaged to him."

"So I was. He was to go abroad to win wealth for both of us. Instead of that, wealth came to him in England, and he stayed away from me. His letters grew cold, then ceased altogether. He had not the manliness to tell me I was free because he was rich, but he left me to wear my heart out with waiting and hoping that he would come back. But all this is past; it happened years ago. I only tell it to you now to show you it is from no want of sympathy, but because I see the sorrow and danger you are incurring that I warn you not to put yourself in the power of a man of whom your friends could know nothing."

"But your friends knew the man to whom you were engaged, and yet he played you false."

"Quite true; but how much greater is your danger? Besides, people might pity, but they could not blame me."

"I don't think much of that; I would rather be without their pity. But you haven't finished your story, have you? Did the man you once loved never come back to you?"

"Yes. When I had ceased to care for him he came, but it was too late. He was no more to me then than that log which floats in the river is to me now."

"Florence, have you seen him since you have been in Worcester?"

"Yes," briefly.

"Would you mind telling me his name?"

"Yes, I do mind it very much, for I am engaged to be the wife of another man—one whom I respect as well as love, and who, as yet, does not know of this page in my life's story; but I will tell you, Clara, upon one condition."

"What is it?"

"That you tell me the name and condition of the man whom you say you are one day to marry, and whom you now meet in secret."

"I cannot," and the girl seemed to shrink as she said the words; "I would if I could, Florence. I should like nothing better than to tell you everything—my own thoughts and feelings, and what he said, and how he looked; but I must not—I dare not. He said it would be all over between us, and we could never meet again if I once told you."

Florence Edgrecombe's face became cold and stern again as she said:

"I am sorry that this admirer of yours should have taken such a violent dislike to me, but of course I cannot give my confidence to one from whom I do not receive any return. But there is one thing, Clara, that I must insist upon. It is that you do not use me as an excuse for any secret proceedings. If your father or your aunt say anything about your being out late again I shall certainly say that you have not been to see me, if such is the case, and that my father has never once brought you home."

"There will be no need for that, for my friend isn't in Worcester any longer; but I don't think you are very kind to me, Florry. You might try to believe in me a little. I assure you most solemnly I have done nothing wrong beyond meeting him and going for a walk once or twice, and if you will have a little patience with me I'll write and beg Charlie to let me tell you."

"Charlie!" repeated Florence, her face becoming white, "surely that is not his name?" Then she added, hastily, "but it is not an uncommon name."

Before Clara could reply a girl's voice greeted them, and looking up, they saw Judith Henen leaning out of the open fly.

"Oh, wait a minute, Florry, and I'll come and walk with you. Ma can go on alone. See what beautiful roses I have; they came from Wardour Hall. Now, which will you have?"

By this time the young lady, who was tired of her mother's company, had reached her cousin's side and had bestowed a smile upon Clara, to whom she was introduced.

Then the three girls walked on together, Judith doing most of the talking; but the interruption was complete. The topic Clara and Florence had been discussing could not be pursued in the presence of a third party, and the discovery which was so nearly being made was postponed till too late.

What momentous issues hang upon trifles! If Clara Cousine had now learnt that the man whom she so blindly loved, and who had bound her to secrecy, was the same who had once acted so falsely to her friend, the knowledge might have been in time to save her.

But Judith's inopportune interruption arrested the words which might have followed. Florry's cry of surprise, and the lost opportunity never came again.

Declining the invitation to enter, Clara parted with her friend at the cottage door, then walked home to write a letter to Charles Rentroll, telling him most of what had passed between Florence and herself, and begging that she might be allowed to confide in her friend, on whose discretion and faithfulness she was ready to stake her own existence. The effect of this epistle we shall learn elsewhere.

CHAPTER X.

A PASSAGE OF ARMS.

To be in a passion you good may do,
But no good if the passion is in you,

"YES, we are going on a visit of indefinite length to Wardour Hall, but we shall come back to you again like bad shillings, depend upon it."

The speaker is Judith Henen, and she is curled up on her cousin's bed, while that young lady is sitting near the dressing-table idly brushing out her own long, abundant and glittering tresses, and listening eagerly enough to the description of the place she has never seen, but which she believes will one day be her home.

"And Mr. Wardour is very unlike his wife, is he?" asked Florence, uttering her own thoughts rather than replying to her cousin's speech.

"Yes, more unlike than you and I are, but he is a dear little old man, one that I should like to put my arms round and hug; not that he looks very old, he hasn't a grey hair, while his wife's is white as silver. She must be ever so much older than he."

"Yes, I think she is older; but does Mr. Wardour look like a man that would take a bitter and lasting dislike to me, Judith?"

"No, my dear child, not a bit of it. I don't believe he has anything to do with opposing his son's marriage with you; it's that high and mighty dame, his wife; she has ruled them all with a rod of iron, and means to do so still; but I don't think she will always be successful. But I'll tell you what it is, Florry; I've been a long time making up my mind to it, and it isn't to my interest to do it, quite the contrary, but I think girls should help one another, especially when old people are plotting against their happiness, so I'm going to help you. I mayn't always be able to show that I'm working for you, or even that I am on your side, but I shall be for all that, and a friend in the enemy's camp is sometimes worth a whole battalion outside the entrenchments. Oh, my dear Flo, what a lovely piece of lace, you must give it to me!"

And Judith sprang from her perch on the bed, and with a warning gesture towards the door, caught up a piece of old point, the corner of which hung out of an Indian box, and began to expatiate upon its beauty.

"I must have it," she went on; "if I've a weakness for anything it's for old point lace. You shall have it back again," she added, in a lower tone; "but she is listening."

"You are quite welcome to it," replied Florence, taking the hint. "Look here," she went on, opening the box; "these were my mother's; I came across them at the bottom of a box the other day; are they not curious?"

And she took out some pieces of jewellery of Indian workmanship.

"Very, and wonderfully pretty too, I should often wear them if I were you. This bracelet, for instance, is exceedingly beautiful."

"Then you must keep it."

"Nonsense, I didn't mean to beg."

"Of course not; but I mean to bestow," she added with a smile; "I value the roses you brought me to-day more than that trinket, I assure you."

"I've got the best of the bargain, at any rate," laughed Judith; then, pushing the box away, she said: "Cover it over, or she will be begging something, and in a louder tone she shouted: "Is that you, ma?"

"Judith!" was the reply from the passage outside.

"Yes! Come here!"

And as Mrs. Henen obeyed the summons, her daughter held up the bracelet, exclaiming:

"See what Flo has given me! Isn't it kind of her?"

"It is, but you ought to have a great quantity of jewellery, Florence; your mother had, and I suppose it all came to you?"

"Yes, it did, aunt. By the way, wouldn't you like a cup of tea? I should. Judith, just touch the bell," and Florence began to plait up her hair, studiously disregarding her aunt's hint.

The tea was ordered. Mercy indulging in a grumble at the extra trouble, of which Florence, as was her wont, took not the least notice, and Mrs. Henen seated herself in a low chair, evidently determined not to leave the two girls alone.

"I'll tell you what it is, Florence, you look so provokingly cool in that white dressing-gown that I shall go and follow your example, only I shall likewise kick off my shoes and stockings; I ought to have been born a savage, I do so hate to have anything on my feet. Good gracious, ma, how you are yawning! I declare it's quite infectious. I'll come back for the tea in a few minutes," and Judith went off, leaving her parent behind.

For fully ten minutes Florence and her aunt sat in silence; the girl knew that this woman was her deadly enemy, for though she had felt it before, Judith's words had turned the suspicion into certainty, and she was now determined that by no act or word of hers would she give her relative a weapon against her. So she went on calmly plaiting her hair, as silently as though she had been alone.

Mrs. Henen, with cat-like scrutiny, watched her, and could not in her heart help admitting that she was a lovely creature to look upon. Not that this softened her towards the girl; on the contrary, it reminded her of that girl's mother, and increased the hatred and bitterness in her heart, and she sat waiting, expecting her niece to ask some question or make some remark which would afford her an opening for her attack. Getting no assistance this way, however, and feeling that time was slipping by, she observed:

"I saw Mrs. Wardour to-day."

"So I presume," was the reply.

"Yes, and she charged me with a message for you. Shall I give it to you now?"

"No, thank you; I have no wish to hear it. I have not the pleasure of Mrs. Wardour's acquaintance, and until I have, no message from her could affect or interest me. And I must say, aunt, for your own benefit, that while you are my father's guest, you will show your good taste, if you have any, by not insulting his daughter."

The old woman's face paled and became of a sickly ashen hue, but she controlled her voice sufficiently to hiss, rather than to say:



[CLARA'S EXPLANATION.]

"Then you refuse to listen to the message of the woman whose son you have lured away from her?"

"Yes—if you choose to put it in that form—I do. If Mrs. Wardour likes to call upon me as an equal—for I am her equal, though she lives in a large house, and I in a small one—I will receive her as a gentlewoman should; and listen to all she has to say with due deference; but I will take no second-hand message from anyone. I should have thought, aunt, as I have the great misfortune to be a relative of yours, and you are our guest at the present moment, you would have had too much family pride and dignity to have listened to aught against any of us."

This last hit touched Mrs. Henen far more keenly than any appeal to her feelings could have done, and she said, with some heat:

"It is not to the family or to you that Mrs. Wardour so positively objects; it is because a most estimable girl has been intended for her son from the birth of the two young people, and every consideration of family interest makes their union desirable, that Arthur Wardour's mother swears she will never receive you into her house as a daughter."

"I don't know that I have any interest in Mrs. Wardour's vows," replied Florence, coldly, though her face was very white; "for it is the son, not the mother, that I shall marry. And," she exclaimed, blazing up from icy coldness into sudden passion, "I shall marry him, aunt. If the bond that unites us is ever broken, it is I—not he—who will break it, and I never shall; but when I am Arthur's wife—and I might have been so now had I chosen—woe to those who stand in my way! Those who have been against me shall be against me always, and I will make no friend of a beaten foe."

"You mean—" said the old woman, with fury.

"I mean, aunt, that I will not discuss the question with you. This is my room; you have your own and the range of the house—such as

it is. Mercy shall bring some tea to you, but I must ask you now to leave me alone."

"Very well, Florence, you have made your choice," and Mrs. Henen rose to her feet; "henceforth I shall refuse to be the bearer of any message to you."

"Do."

And the girl turned away, while the baffled woman bounced out of the room. In the short distance between the two bedrooms she met her daughter wearing a white dressing-gown, but with bare feet.

"Florence has ordered me out of her room. She wishes to be alone," exclaimed Mrs. Henen, furiously.

"Bosh!" was the reply; "you and she have been quarrelling, of course; it's what I never do. I'm going there for some tea and a nap."

"Judith! If you are not true to me I will strike you down as ruthlessly as I will strike her," hissed the mother, in passionate, threatening tones.

"My dear mother, I'll do as I told you I'd do. I'll obey you in that matter, but I'm not going to be made the blind victim of other people's squabbles. You're driving too many engines, and some of them must come to grief. In the bargain we made I will play my stipulated part, but I am going to be free in all other things, or I shall cry off."

"But you wouldn't fight against me? My own child!"

"Well, no; I wouldn't fight against you, but I do decline to be always in hot water on your account. I hate such constant worry and excitement, and I'm sleepy. Flo's bed is softer than ours, and I am going to sleep upon it."

With which, Miss Judith walked on, leaving her mother to cool as quickly or as slowly as she chose. It must have been quite half an hour later, and Judith having drank her tea had composed herself to sleep, when she asked, suddenly:

"Haven't I seen that Miss Cousins somewhere in London, Florry?"

"No, that is impossible; she has never been to London," was the reply.

"Well; it's very odd. I seem to know her face as well as I do yours or my own. She is very pretty, and she seems to remind me of some theatre. You are sure she has never been on the stage."

"Quite sure. I have known her nearly two years. Her father is a physician, and I have heard him and others say she has never been from home without some member of the family being with her."

"Well, I may be mistaken, but I can't believe it," returned Judith; "except that I can't think of the name, I could swear that I have seen that girl on the boards of a theatre or her portrait placarded about the streets. I feel perfectly certain of it."

"Impossible!" was again the reply; "no girl could have lived a more quiet life than Clara; it would have been better for her perhaps if she had seen more of the world."

"The young person I take her for has seen enough and to spare," was the dry rejoinder; "but not that I like your friend; but now I remember, the girl I take her to be was named Rosalind, and she was an actress of course. I saw her at the 'Fantastic' only a few months ago."

"Then I am quite sure you are wrong; another girl might be like her, but Clara Cousins could not have been in London during the last year without my knowing it."

"Very well, then; it was her double. Now I'll go to sleep."

And true to her word, Judith was soon sleeping the sleep of oblivion, if not of infantile innocence.

"What a ridiculous thing to say about Clara," thought Florence; but for all that she could not forget it, and long after she remembered it, though she little thought now of the dark secret which lay behind what at present seemed but a mistake or a coincidence.

(To be Continued.)



[FAIR AND FALSE.]

LADY VIOLET'S VICTIMS.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AN EVENING PARTY.

And leaving life with sick recoil,
Because not in congenial soil.

THERE was none of the severe pinching and scraping—the cheese-paring and scheming, so common among those who study the sweet simplicity of the genteel, and to whom a cook and housemaid represent the painful outlay of a hundred a year—when the Earl of Harrington's daughter, Lady Violet, sent out her invitations for a dance.

It never entered either her ladyship or the veteran housekeeper's mind to wonder whether custard powder would produce the agreeable saving it was advertised as doing, in lieu of eggs, amid the fancy dishes that would grace the supper-table, or if jelly could be produced at threepence a glass cheaper through using dubious gelatine in place of warranted calves' feet, or if oyster soup and oyster patties, made of rock oysters instead of the best natives, would yet convey that delicate mingling of piquancy and freshness associated with the more expensive mollusc; even the dimensions of various magnificent trifles were not matters of careful consideration any more than was the quality of the exquisite Roederer champagne, and the indisputable richness of the unmatchable Hock and Chambertin. Nothing was spared in the matter of outlay, and all the luxuries that render life endurable were here ready to be enjoyed without thought of cost or care.

Profusion reigned on all sides—from the conservatory flowers that shed no perfume as they shone from their setting of dark green leaves that crept in trembling sweetness around the silvered vine leaves and figures on the épergnes, to the golden chalices, the mighty

tankards, the huge silver salvers, the boned turkeys, the boars' heads, the roast pheasants and truffled fowls, that were all purchased recklessly, after the manner of the wealthy.

Airy forms seemed to float from amidst the flowers and entreat the guests to enjoy themselves. Marvellous crackers—the latest novelties from a great West-end confectioners—caressed the jellies and sported around the trifles and creams, and mingled with the various fruits of the dessert, as if they appreciated this festive occasion as well as the unscented flowers.

The supper had been arranged in the grand banqueting hall, and here, where Norman warriors had drank to King William's health ere slaying Saxon Harold at Battle Abbey, reigned merriment, feasting, and flirting.

But the dancing, after all, was the chief, best thing, at least so the ladies always declared; eating and drinking were secondary and plebeian, and it was not to be expected fine ladies and gentlemen would ever "fall to" with the simple energy and gustativeness of the "poor Hodges" of our land who are yearly regaled at pastoral harvest-homes on roast beef and beer, crying "Three cheers for t' maister" with all the ardour that consecrated gratitude, well-intentioned sentiments, excellent digestion, and sobriety will admit.

Lady Violet's guests were people of the great world; "the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind" never darkened this palatial home; women whose superb richness of outline and rare physical beauty proclaimed that they were descended from splendid races, and men whose unemotional reserve and dignity suggested a life untrammelled by toil, want, or anxiety—all reflected the glory of wealth, the sensuous repose of ease, the languid ennui and beautiful indolence of which money alone is the promoter and giver.

A large dais had been raised at one end of the drawing-room in which tropical plants, Grecian statues (three of which had been in existence two hundred years anti-Christi) concealed the prosaic heads of the musicians from the eyes of

the elegant company. They must remain as nearly invisible as possible.

It was not the band of the 5th Lancers or 10th Hussars that had been reserved for this occasion, but carefully trained musicians who made music their trade, and charged accordingly—whose dance music was maddeningly lively and artistic. Delicious airs by Strauss, Waldfenf, and Gung'l stole through the conservatories and corridors. But the musicians might have been figures of stone, or forms in a painting, for all the signs they gave of mirth or animation.

They sipped the refreshments provided for them in the same blank emotionless way they played their music, and if some breathless and panting nymph found her white satin shoes entangled in yards of tulle or lace, and clutched the dais for support, after a voluptuous waltz—not one shoulder was shrugged, not a muscle of their features evinced interest, derision, or admiration, although the beauty might have the features of a Musidora or a Dresden shepherdess, or possess the contours of a Phidian goddess.

But when we add they were Germans, nourished on "heavy Wagner" beer, varied by the exquisite compound called "Weiss-Bier," their stolidity may not be a matter of so much surprise. No French, English, Italian or Swiss could have looked on that galaxy of loveliness with such stolid indifference.

Lady Violet had led Meredith through every species of mild torture ever since she commenced to dress. Her hair was first braided in heavy plaits after the Marguerite fashion, but this her ladyship declared produced a certain olden look that did not quite harmonize with the aerial white silk dress trimmed with rich lace and chenille fringes, emeralds and pearls, &c. Plaits made her look like one of Henry VIII.'s wives at Madame Tussaud's. Curls would give a pensive archness to her expression, but then curls were detestable when they became limp and lanky; besides, they were bad form, and reminded her of

a factory girl out for a holiday. What could Meredith suggest?

Thus appealed to, the lady's-maid produced a coiffure à la Maintenon of unrivalled taste and lightness, and after two hours' submission to hot irons and cosmetics "awful beauty put on all her charms," and Lady Violet pronounced her head quite perfect. It was small and fashionable, but not quite the "Langry" shape, which always annoyed her when she criticised that woman of fashion's photograph.

Who could place a ribbon or a rose like Meredith? She had suggested real flowers to her ladyship, as they could be replenished every hour if they drooped or faded. So helpless roses were wired and speared and slaughtered like so many human souls at Beauty's triumphs.

"One would think it was my first ball," she said, laughing lightly, and powdering her forehead with valentine just as her dress was being laced, and a waist of twenty-four inches compressed into nineteen. "I feel so foolish about effect and taste to-night. Give me my fan and diamond bracelet. Yes, and my cloak. Now I am ready."

There was a bright flush on her cheek that did not owe its existence entirely to the rouge Meredith carefully applied.

"To-night will decide all," her ladyship thought, "and I shall either win or lose our Moldavian baron."

Lionel started as he saw her approach him. She was strangely like that sweet murdered Constance he still thought of in his weird, persistent way. The same lightness of step, ease of manner, perfect grace and elegance of carriage. He was leaning against a corner of the grand piano (also on the dals) at which a little, wild-eyed man with long hair sat and performed musical pyrotechnics to the evident boredom of the company, who looked upon sonatas with indifference, and were longing for the band to strike up and the dancing again begin.

"Ah, cher Herr König," cried Lady Violet, advancing to the pianist. "So good of you to give us such a treat. Pray continue, I long to hear the scherzo at the end."

The inscrutable artist again returned with volcanic fury to his attack. He belonged to that newer, higher, and more elaborate school of music of the present day, which, like the higher branches of mathematics, is only very good for certain organisations and capacities. He missed notes, skipped bars, and blundered and floundered like the great and original artist he was reported to be.

"How I wish I could play like that," murmured Lady Violet, in apparent ecstasy, while the band leant pensively on their instruments, listening to the finale.

"Ah, that is art; that is the fine art," cried the German, "to interpret phrases as we like, with all our intellect, our souls, our strength."

Lionel and Sir Hugh now drew near, the latter wondering why the musician never had his hair cut. A faint murmur rose from the guests. König waved his hands as if performing to a multitudinous assemblage in some monster concert-hall. He seemed to have forgotten how small his audience was—barely three hundred people.

"That was really splendid," assented the earl, who had watched König's fingers with the attention a kitten gives to a cork.

The supposed baron now advanced, and smiling a little, said:

"Herr König waves the composer's rights. He rejects the order and harmony of a phrase to follow his own rendering of it."

The German sprang to his feet.

"Do you mean to insult my art?" he cried, "to pretend I not play as an artist, with an artist's divine talisman, to interpret as he please? Oh, this is English amateur criticism. Perhaps the Baron Mivar can play for us in his way."

There was a slight pause, and then Lionel, drawing off his lemon-coloured gloves, accepted König's test, and sat down to the piano. But it was not a sonata or cascade of chromatics he attempted; it was a simple melody he had written years ago in his cottage-home, and that

he had listened to on his arrival at the Hall a fortnight ago. And as he sang in his rich tenor voice they clustered around him in surprise, and listened, heart-penetrated and touched by its perfect pathos.

There was a hush—a murmur. Someone clad in white was seen descending the staircase, gliding through their midst and approaching the piano. It was a strange moment. Lionel, his back turned to the phantom, still continued singing, while König regarded him steadily. Who was she? From what mysterious portals could a creature in white issue, save from a grave? Whence did she come? Coming to him, and why to him? Her arms outstretched, tears on her cheek, and yet eyes closed—fast closed, and lashes sweeping the oval cheek, all worn with weeping.

"Good heavens! It is Constance," cried the earl, leaving the throng round the piano, while Meredith's affrighted face appeared at the doorway.

"Constance, walking too in her sleep."

"Get her away quietly, as quickly as you can," whispered Lady Violet to her father and Meredith. "Why, she was coming straight to the baron. How it must have startled him if he had seen her."

"Lionel! Lionel!" cried a voice he knew, and started from his chair, but only to catch sight of a group of people leading a woman to the door, while Lady Violet shrieked, threw up her arms, and then sank to the ground.

"What is it?" asked Sir Hugh, seizing Lady Violet's scent bottle, and breaking the stopper in his anxiety to apply the smelling salts.

"Why, some servant walking in her sleep, so they say," answered a colonel in the artillery, pulling his moustache and turning aside, while König, running his fingers through his hair, said it was shocking, and implored the band for a waltz; and this waltz soon changed all their thoughts.

Lady Violet revived as if by magic and accepted the baron's arm. Lionel was still pale from the surprise and bewilderment of hearing his name wafted to him across the room; but he told himself this must have been a mere nervous fancy—a vague hallucination of the brain.

"I suppose I must give Sir Hugh the next gallop," Lady Violet was saying, as she gathered her long draperies around her, and entered the conservatory with her partner.

He might be more expansive amid the fairy-like blossoms here, or at least offer her a flower. She had not forgotten Meredith's communication. Sir Hugh had sunk into a mere nobody in her estimation. She wished to travel—to visit foreign lands, and he always detested leaving England for European wanderings.

Lionel looked at the haughty beauty on his arm with a sort of wonderment. Fate, he thought, implacable as death, had all along been against him. She was so like Constance, and yet so unlike. She was the careless, cold, pleasure-loving devotee of fashion—her sister the guardian spirit of a home; one all art, the other all nature.

"You like waltzing, Lady Violet?"

"Immensely."

"Then you would enjoy Vienna; the dancing there is unrivalled."

She was standing below a magnificent azalea—it's leaves just touched her hair—a lemon plant at her right hand. She tore off a few of the leaves and scattered them around in careless profusion. The soft moonlight streamed through the vine leaves that clung to the conservatory walls, and surrounded her as a halo. She fancied someone was watching her from the garden side, and she was right, Sir Hugh noted every glance and gesture. She had snubbed him unmistakably all the evening. His spirit resented it, and he meant to take an early opportunity of informing her of the fact. Lady Violet, alone with the baron, grew less reticent.

"Do you know, baron," she said, coqueting with the lemon plant, "I have been hearing a most romantic history of a child stolen from its cradle by a malicious gipsy—brought up in ignorance of its origin—reared in poverty and

ignorance and want, and yet all the time the heir to splendid property."

The baron's features worked. The moonlight fell on a convulsed and agitated face, blanching it to marble pallor.

"And did you believe it, Lady Violet?"

"I mean to prove if it be true or false."

"How?"

"By seeking the gipsy and questioning her myself."

"You will seek her?"

"Most assuredly. I—moi qui vous parle."

His hand involuntarily stole to the small gold anchor he had drawn from Lady Constance's throat. He thought of the initials faintly carved on the gold.

"And then will justice be done? Pardon me, Lady Violet, you have withheld this injured man's name."

Sir Hugh, tapping at the glass and disturbing the vine leaves, now entered. In his anxiety to hear more particulars of the mystery of his birth, Lionel had placed his hand on the jewelled one of Lady Violet, and she had not withdrawn hers.

"You need not remove your hand from his, Violet," Sir Hugh said, with incisive bitterness, "because your love was but a mockery—a sordid calculation of chances, and you have given me ample proof of this to-night. You have crushed out the most unselfish love ever offered you. In future you are free."

"So soon," she answered, with bright defiance and a gay insolent laugh. "Well, so be it, my preux cavalier. As you will!"

And she threw down the onyx bracelet, his betrothal gift, at his feet, and taking the baron's arm, turned to leave.

Lionel drew her hand this time (apparently) almost tenderly in his own. He hated her as one merciless and cruel, worldly and false. The news of his own high lineage, for he was sure she alluded to him, came as a dull lingering pain.

"Now, Baron, I will tell you the name."

"You will?"

His voice, spite of all his endeavours, trembled, his heart beat to suffocation. He was about to hear from her lips—his enemy and persecutor—the name of the unknown father who he once believed had abandoned him to his fate, and after all this father had not been cruel nor forsaken him.

"He is the brother of the Honourable Hugh Allerton, Sir Lionel, who is the just heir to the Allerton estates. He was reared, as I told you, poor and obscure, and came as a landscape gardener on my father's estates. He designed that Italian garden before us with great taste. He took the name of Lionel Hargrave. He accompanied your friend, Hugh Allerton, to Australia as a sort of companion. Why you may even have met him out in the bush."

The baron lifted his eyeglass and shook his head.

"A—positively don't remember. Meet all sorts of strange people in the bush, don't you know?"

There must surely be more to hear; he waited for her to continue.

"Well, at any rate he went to Australia—sailed in the 'Ariadne,' which was burnt at sea, and is there still managing a sheep farm."

"Indeed! Poor wretch! it must be very lonely out there just now."

"This landscape gardener loved my sister, and of course if we had only known he was of noble birth, all would have ended differently. He married my sister Constance in defiance of all, saved her life once by leaping through the ice when the skaters—"

"Ah! then the fellow had some pluck in him."

"He was really wonderful. Treated us with the coolest reserve, refused our money, and scorned everybody."

"And your sister, Lady Constance, how did she act?"

"She loved him to madness. My father's severities may have hastened her end, but that is all over, and now we've had enough of this

'*histoires*,' I think; suppose we join the dancers?"

All over? Was it indeed so? Even now as Lady Violet speaks, her victim pacing the room but a few yards from him, implores to be allowed to make a simple toilette, and enter that drawing-room once more to interpret her dream.

Meredith was seated on the edge of the bed in Lady Constance's room, her watchful gaze turned on her with suspicious fear. She had thrown off the loose white wrapper in which she had descended to the drawing-room, and her long, unbound hair streamed below her waist; she was pacing up and down with nervous eagerness.

"That is a bad sign, my lady, your taking to walking in your sleep again," Meredith was saying, "and how you startled some of the company."

"I regret for the first time I have refused to return to the world," said Lady Constance, pausing in her walk; "tell me, Meredith, did no one sing? Was it indeed only a dream?"

"Of course, my lady, only a dream. The musicians were playing a brilliant waltz when you suddenly appeared like a ghost among all the guests."

"Something drew me to the room. In another moment I should have awoke."

"On the contrary, you were an hour lying on this bed ere you awoke."

"I long for music," muttered Lady Constance, feverishly. "I must dress. I will wear my white cashmere and descend. It is my wish to see this party. I am not weak or ill."

"The guests are leaving; it is nearly two o'clock."

A new impulse seized her. Turning to a small cottage piano she sang over the following verses:

Thy voice is near me in my dreams,
In accents soft and low;
Breathing of happiness and love,
In days, long days ago.

She threw exquisite feeling into the simple melody, but the effort was more than her strength could bear; she burst into tears.

"You fancied Lionel Hargrave was singing," said Meredith, after a pause, "and that was why you rose from your sleep to seek him. I swear to you, Lady Constance, that the day you meet him again you will die."

Lionel seemed transfixed with his companion's revelations. He felt on the brink of bursting into furious speech, of confessing his identity with that of the banished man, and of calling down condign vengeance on the heads of those who had slain his wife. But he controlled himself with supreme effort.

"Do you mean to say, Lady Violet, that these severities killed your sister?"

Lady Violet imagined the baron was making a note of the scene of English life for future development in "his personal reminiscences of England and the English," and said:

"No, hardly that; she had a fever, and slowly wasted away. She was always delicate."

The baron was silent a few seconds, in which they listened to a brilliant waltz of "Gung'l," and then said, quietly:

"Dear Lady Violet, your story has interested me extremely. Who was the father of this wandering heir Lionel?"

"Sir Phoenix Allerton. Ah! You start, Baron. You may recollect hearing of him; a grand, cold sort of man, massive and adamantine."

"There was of course some reason for this theft of his first-born."

"Of course there was a reason, and a very powerful one to an ignorant mind."

"Money, I suppose?"

"Oh, dear no, quite the contrary. It must have been rather a losing game I should think for the gipsy."

"Gipsy, did you say? Is it possible England protects gypsies? We shall have a free pardon offered to French and Italian brigands soon."

"But gypsies are generally rather harmless in England, Baron. Don't, pray, run away with the idea we have colonies or settlements of

these animals ready to undermine us; beyond robbing a hen-roost now and then, they seldom do much harm."

"But in this case, Lady Violet, your gypsies were somewhat fatal. I would have no mercy. I would sentence them to death," said the terrible Baron, in a strong aside.

"It seems this Sir Phoenix Allerton deceived some low gipsy, and she plotted the revenge of stealing his first-born. Neat idea, was it not? And worthy of a modern opera, but where shall we find the vindictive baritone?"

She laughed as she spoke. He turned away his head, oppressed with a half hysterical desire to weep. Sir Phoenix Allerton! He then was this man's child and heir. He understood now the meaning of Aphra's obscure phrases, but he also remembered how as a child he had clung to her and called her "mother," nestling to her heart and falling asleep in her arms. He remembered her countless sacrifices, her affectionate devotedness; but she had been instrumental in slaying Lady Constance—he could not forgive her. By what right did she elect to rule his destiny? What she called in her ignorant reasoning revenge had been death to his love, and nought could change that overwhelming agony.

Lionel longed to be alone, to think. He could scarcely reply with tact or discretion. The first impulse that occurred to him was to let all drift on as usual; make no efforts to regain his rights, but let his brother innocently usurp them and return to Australia, withering for ever from the memory of men. His brother! That thought was in itself a new joy; they were united now by a close relationship—a tender tie. He was not an isolated cipher without kith or kin. He could clasp his brother's hand with warmth and heart-felt affection. And yet, what had he not lost through Aphra's wickedness? A perfect education; refined friends; a beautiful home; an adoring wife.

Lionel, under no circumstances, would have ever been a gross pleasure-seeker like his father, but he too had longed for more ease, rest, luxury and study. He had been treated with contumely and insult; little kindness or consideration had ever been shown him. Under-gardeners and carpenters had endeavoured to fraternise with him, and called him proud and upstart for keeping apart, but Darnatt had always treated him with deference and respect, and hinted at strange deeds waiting to be revealed. Well, they were known at last, and yet the new page he was turning over in his life's history must be still a blank.

Lady Violet did not perceive the change in him at that moment. She was talking to a group of friends at her left, but she returned to the baron as soon as they had glided away, as he was her partner for a galop. But Lionel did not feel equal to the effort; his head ached furiously; a mist darkened his senses and vision. She now detected his pallor and agitation, and attributed them to a very different cause to the right one, as she glanced at herself in a long, gold mirror.

"Are you ill or suffering?" she asked. "Come out into the fresh air, the heat here is suffocating, and the drawing-room is so crowded."

She thought it was an emotional attack, partly created through her own presence and influence, and this same conjecture occurred to Lionel. He could bear it no longer. He must rid her of this false impression. It was very difficult. The woman who had thrown her icy scorn in his teeth, ere he knelt by his beloved one's side in that confined silence, had little guessed how the tables might one day be turned.

"The cause of these attacks to which I am subject, Lady Violet, is purely mental. Some time ago my life was visited by a great sorrow."

Here was a suitable occasion for sympathetic interest. The baron, after all, was mortal, and he doubtless meant to confide this sorrow to her keeping. Nothing is so becoming to a woman as sympathy, even in a ball-room. She had laughed and coquettish and dazzled enough. She could now appear as the muse of the "tender melancholy." Perhaps the memory of the duel and the man he had slain affected his imagination,

but more probably some woman had to do with it. She hoped it was no harrowing love affair she was expected to listen to. So she said, pensively:

"Ah, Baron, if you had some loving heart in which to confide your grief it might be lessened."

Lionel shook his head.

"Alas, no! I must go down silent to my grave."

"But have you never thought of marriage, Baron; of sharing this cruel torment?"

There was a new break in his tone as he said faintly, turning away his head.

"Dear Lady Violet, impossible. I am already married."

Lady Violet loosed the baron's arm with a jerk. She had never felt more chagrined. She had lost Sir Hugh for no purpose; but she was too well trained to give any outward evidence of her mortification, and merely said "Indeed," turning the subject with her usual polished ease, but Lionel found she remembered she was engaged for the next galop to the colonel in the artillery.

Dr. Moseley and his wife Tessa were among the guests—the latter wearing a many-skirted Tarlatan looped over ruby satin, and a spiked wreath of corn-flowers and poppies that suggested in the distance the crown of a Greek god.

He had duly impressed upon her the necessity for increased dignity, decorum and silence. Indeed it had been a painful journey for both in the railway carriage, for Tessa had a far-reaching sense of horror connected with the Earl of Harrington's family which she could not exactly define, but which affected her as it might some helpless animal that had been driven along a dark road and fallen into a pit at the end, and was now being made to traverse the same ground again.

Dr. Moseley confessed to the warmest admiration for Lady Violet; and never had he performed a toilette with greater care. He tied and re-tied his white tie till it was so creased he had to use another. Steel-coloured Brazilian diamonds (the gift of his Creole mamma) of the finest quality adorned his spotless shirt, ironed, unknown to him, by his domesticated wife, who prided herself no paid washerwoman could ever give the perfection to the narrow frills that she could. Gaslight tinted his beautiful coffee-coloured complexion à merveille, and gave him the presence of a fashionable Othello who could bluster satisfactorily without the finale of the pillow.

And now they were enjoying the dancing in the magnificent room of the Hall. Dr. Moseley had Lady Violet's name twice down on his card for the Lancers and a set of quadrilles after supper; Tessa consoling herself with trying a polka with a beardless youth who felt flattered that any woman (during a temporary absence of mind) should accept him as partner. But to polk well, or indeed to polk at all, requires some knowledge and experience of the step.

Tessa could dance in her native village, and would have made the fortune of any wandering padroni whose piano-organ-letting was their chief business in life, but a polka in a fashionable drawing-room made other claims on her powers.

It was not that she lacked bounce or assurance, but knowledge, and her feet came down like her favourite flat-irons on her young companion's patent leathers, thereby causing him to draw up one leg like a juvenile stork, with a very compressed scowl about his mouth, and when after another gallant attempt they charged some side couples and were driven back as with the force of a gale against the mantel-piece, and Tessa's many-skirted Tarlatan hung around her in shreds, so that she might have sat for a popular dealer in cast-off clothes trying on a dress she had got a "real bargain," then did they renounce the heat of battle, and Tessa, a woeful picture of desolation, was not sorry to find herself seated on a crimson satin ottoman in one of the smaller drawing-rooms where cards were going on.

But she soon returned to view the dancing. Were not Ebenezer's fine diamonds flashing before many lovely ladies' eyes, and she mistrusted English ladies with their cold, quiet ways and soft voices that almost seemed to half retreat; it certainly raised her jealousy to witness his evolutions with Lady Violet as the Lancers were danced. She was quite sure he squeezed her ladyship's hand more than was good for him in the grand chain, or else why did Lady Violet smile at him so reproachfully and shake her head?

Tessa missed a good deal that was going on around, but she did not miss that, and yet, spite of her mental qualms, she began to be unmistakably hungry, and she remembered there was always a supper at evening parties, even if people stood up at a sideboard to eat it.

The beardless youth who had recovered his temper and breath, and was gathering up the dismembered pieces of Tarlatan, was also afflicted with similar pangs. He answered her glance at once, and offering her his arm, bore her triumphantly along, while Tessa, remembering her husband's chestnut eyes were upon her, closed her lips bravely, and would not even mutter to herself till they were out on the staircase and away from all chance of pursuit. It somewhat startled the collegian to hear her say, as a waiter hurriedly placed a plate before her:

"No; I'll not be put off with die worse bits. Why should I, when my dress cost sixty-seven shillings, and I've got it spoilt for not'ing if I've to eat dees leetle bones? Giv' me some of dat great round turkey in die silver dish."

But to make a brisk charge at a boned turkey—a centre dish of solid magnificence, with footmen and waiters crowding round it, is a more difficult matter than may be imagined. The young Englishman, however, did his best, but he had at last to resort to a ruse. He quietly sliced away at the breast of a chicken, and handed these delicate morsels to Tessa, who after tasting it pushed away her plate angrily, tipping a glass of champagne over a duchess's grey satin at the same time.

"Really, madame," began the youth, "I have done my best; besides, the turkey is nearly all gone. We are late as it is."

"Late? And whose fault we are late? Why, yours; instead of dancing, you should 'ave brought me in here."

Which attack, save for the sweetly broken accent, savoured so strangely of Billingsgate, that her astonished partner indulged in a somewhat hysterical laugh, which made the butler believe he had dipped too freely into the champagne.

But there was a rapid change in Tessa's verbiage. Dr. Moseley, with Lady Violet on his arm, now approached, trifling with one of the unpronounceable crackers and making his chestnut orbs elegant with feeling. Tessa, while longing for a glass of the "Birra di Chiavenna," partook of the champagne quite pleasantly, nibbling her chicken with resigned sweetness, so that after her third glass she nodded discreetly at her husband, who shook three fingers so warningly at her she was not sorry to retire to the drawing-room and look on at the "Ladies' Quadrille."

"That is a singularly handsome man, that a—Baron Mivar, who sang for us, and whom I saw you were dancing with an hour ago." Dr. Moseley was saying, studying Lady Violet's expression. Lady Violet, drawing off her gros perle four-buttoned gloves, merely said:

"Do you think so? He is immensely wealthy, and has, so they say, some crazy ideas about liberty and all that nonsense."

"These fine fellows never can drift with the stream like other blockheads," said the doctor, musingly, "and thus they so often get out of their depths and are lost."

She smiled and admired the doctor's perspicuity.

"Now, I have had all sorts of longings and dreams in my time, although my profession disposes one to practicality as much or even more so than any other. I felt the fantasies of a poet eddying through my brain. I looked at

the moonlight on delicious perfumed nights under the Pergolas, and even seized a quill to put to paper the myriad ecstasies that consumed me, but I said to myself, no, this will not do. Should I meet a kindred soul we shall both be lost through love and poetry. I will give these fine impulses and exalted musings into the keeping of a dull and homely creature, who will rather if anything disgust me with romance, so that I shall be ashamed to gush, to yearn, to sigh, and together we shall prosper through the subtle charm of our antipathies."

Lady Violet folded her gloves one over the other, and looked interested.

"I believe you were right," she said.

"Right in a worldly sense, perhaps, yet I doubt it; but oh, believe me, I suffer pangs unknown to such fair creatures as you."

"The baron is dreadfully bored too with everything."

"Ah, looks like it. Uncommonly fine head of hair the fellow's got, and no mistake," added the doctor, rising to leave the supper table. "How old should you think he could be?"

"Not a day under forty-five."

"Really! Shouldn't have thought it. Married?"

"Yes, years ago."

"These fellows often go half a dozen times through the Divorce Court, but he looks too troubled to be heartless."

"You are right, doctor, his life is darkened with some shadow. He is either eaten up with remorse or anguish."

"Ought to go on the stage and be a second Talma," said the doctor, then with an after-thought:

"He must love you, Lady Violet, and that is the cause of his gloom. Who could behold such charms and beauty and genius and refinement unmoved?"

And again the chestnut eyes met hers with a very different look to that which often startled Jennings and the assistants. He felt more at liberty to expand, Tessa doubtless being still busy over the ice-creams and trifles.

"I don't think so," Lady Violet answered, this time, very truthfully. "Marriage is often a tremendous kill-joy."

"It certainly does not always answer," he replied. "I, too, like your baron, am wealthy, and I am miserable. I made the egregious error of marrying a simple-minded soul, or rather body, who has no ambition to rise."

"Ah! you are ambitious."

Dr. Moseley smothered his agitation.

"Do not—do not let us speak of these things, dear lady," he cried, detecting Tessa's spiked helmet at the doorway, and to his horror she was fanning herself with her pocket-handkerchief.

Lady Violet did not care to be the victim of an Italian's jealousy, for Tessa's eyes had a very different light in them to the doctor's, and since the effect of the wine at supper, she looked like a woman who might give a blow and forget to apologise. Lady Violet detested scenes and to be regarded malignantly.

"I leave you, dear Dr. Moseley, for the present," Lady Violet said, meaningly, while Herr Kenig, his hair apparently longer than ever since disturbed by the dancing, and whose artistic soul was evidently not above the sinister influences of hock and lobster salad, claimed her as his partner, and kept that perfect time in his dancing which warranted the eulogies of the press on his exquisite method on the pianoforte.

"What has come to Violet?" asked Sir Hugh, sauntering towards Lionel, "and what on earth, if I may be allowed to ask, has come to our Baron? You look like a man who has had a shock. Has she accepted you or eloped with Moseley? Come, man, let us try a cigarette in the fumoir."

The two brothers linked their arms in each other, and walked towards the library.

"If you please, sir," said the butler, addressing Sir Hugh, "there's been a gipsy woman at the door for hours begging to be allowed to speak a word to you. She said you rescued her from prison."

Lionel laid his hand on his brother's shoulder.

"Do not go to her," he said, firmly, "better not."

"Why?"

"Because I have not yet decided whether to let a secret, affecting you, die with me."

"Lionel, you are wrong."

"Send her away," Lionel said to the butler, in a new voice and gesture of command. "I insist on it."

The man withdrew.

"Well?" asked Sir Hugh, "what does all this mean?"

"I have at last learnt the true history of my birth," Lionel said, reaching out his hand and looking lovingly, yet half regretfully, into his brother's face.

(To be Continued.)

THE TUNNEL UNDER THE BRITISH CHANNEL.

THE reason why the Channel Tunnel Company recently ceased their operations in St. Margaret's Bay is stated to be that, when the reports as to the soundings between Sangatte and St. Margaret's Bay were handed in by the surveyors, it was found that to cut a tunnel between those points would entail an enormous amount of work in sinking. The site in question has, therefore, been finally abandoned. The scheme now before the company provides for sinking of a new shaft at or close to Dover.

The site on the French side at Sangatte, near Boulogne, is still looked upon as the best that could be chosen for the commencement of the tunnel. The shaft sunk there is already 70 metres in depth, with a diameter of 2 metres, and the engineers consider that when they have got 10 metres further down the horizontal cutting may be commenced.

The engineers of both countries agree that the French opening of the tunnel is the most difficult part of the undertaking, as a clayey soil has to be dealt with instead of chalk, and the incursion of water causes much trouble.

POISONS.

We all have a great horror of being poisoned without exactly understanding what it is.

Poison is a disorganisation of flesh, or blood, or both. Poisons are of two kinds. One, the result of medicinal agents taken into the stomach or circulation, the other the result of bites or stings of living creatures. I will now state two ideas, which if generally known, and remembered, would save thousands of lives every year.

If you have swallowed a poison, whether laudanum, arsenic, or other things poisonous, put a tablespoon of ground mustard in a glass of water, cold or warm, stir and swallow quickly, and instantaneously the contents of the stomach will be thrown up, not allowing the poisonous substance time to be absorbed and taken into the blood, and as soon as vomiting ceases, swallow the white of one or two new eggs, for the purpose of antagonising any small portion of the poison which may have been left behind. Let the reader remember the principle, which is to get the poison out of you as soon as possible; there are other things which will produce a speedy emetic effect, but the advantage of mustard is, it is always at hand, it acts instantaneously, without any after medicinal effects.

TAKING COLD.

WHEN a person begins to shiver, the blood is receding from the surface; congestion, to a greater or less extent has taken place, and the patient has already taken cold, to be followed by fever, inflammation of the lungs, neuralgia,

rheumatism, &c. All these evils can be avoided and the cold expelled by walking, or in some exercise that will produce a prompt and decided reaction in the system. The exercise should be sufficient to produce perspiration.

If you are so situated that you can get a glass of hot water to drink, it will materially aid the perspiration, and in every way assist nature in her efforts to remove the cold. This course followed, your cold is at an end, and whatever disease it would ultimate in is avoided; your sufferings are prevented, and your doctor's bill saved.

A RUSSIAN HERO. OR.

Marko Tyre's Treason.

CHAPTER XII.

At the spot where we first saw Roda, a power in the midst of her beautiful gardens, she was again to be seen just as the sun of another day was withdrawing from the western heavens.

She was a little paler than usual, and, if possible, a shade more thoughtful. It would have been easy to see by the seriousness of her face, that the hour of a momentous resolution was upon her.

Suddenly she arose to her feet, while the expression of serious inquiry upon her countenance gave place to lines full of energy and decision.

"My mind is made up," she breathed. "I will accept her majesty's kind invitation. To do so will strengthen my hands in the work before me, and perhaps bring about a solution of the terrible mystery respecting the fates of my father and mother. The new life must even help me in my relations to Marko."

She walked out of the bower, soon encountering her maid.

"Prepare for a journey, Mouska," she ordered. "I am going to town immediately."

"To-night, mistress?" asked Mouska, surprised.

"Yes, Mouska—within the hour!" and the entire soul of our heroine seemed afame with energy. "This long life here is ended for ever! I am going to the great capital—to court—forth into the great world—never, never to return to this spot until I have learned what has become of my parents, and solved the mystery of their strange disappearance! Heaven be with us!"

There were, of course, many measures to be taken before Roda could set forth upon the proposed journey.

But by the end of a couple of hours she had seen her intendant and the overseers of her various estates, in regard to the business affairs of the next few weeks, and was ready for her contemplated visit to the capital.

The spacious family carriage, drawn by a trio of stout horses, was accordingly ordered to the door, and the ample effects of our heroine were placed in it. By this time evening had fully set in.

There was, of course, no little difficulty in starting.

The lonely and sorrowing girl had not left home since the strange disappearance of her father, and there were many members of the household, male and female, especially among the old and favourite dependents, who felt and declared that all sorts of calamities would grow out of her departure.

But, at last, the oft-repeated farewells were exchanged, and Roda stepped forth, lighted by numerous torches, notwithstanding the brightness of the moon and stars, and took her place in the vehicle.

Very sweet and lovely did she appear in the new suit she had donned, which had recently been acquired of the court modiste, and which

had been imported expressly for her from one of the great houses of Paris.

Beside Roda, in the body of the carriage, sat her favourite maid, Mouska, a light-hearted and chatty girl, not far from Roda's age, whose rare ability and sterling worth were excelled only by her love and reverence for her young mistress.

In front of Roda, facing her, sat Mrs. Pleffsky, a distant connection by marriage, a woman of middle age, of good attainments, who had long made her home with the family, and who not only worshipped our heroine, but insisted, since the disappearance of General Gradowsky, on hovering constantly near the fair heiress, to save her from some dreadful fate which she did not doubt would otherwise soon be forthcoming.

It is hardly necessary to say that Mrs. Pleffsky looked upon this journey by night with great disfavour.

To hear her apprehensions, one would have thought the country overrun with wolves and robbers and escaped Siberians, even to the very heart of the capital!

An old and careful driver, a stalwart boy upon the near horse, and two footmen at the rear of the carriage, completed Roda's attendance.

The entire party was well armed, and had a couple of lighted lanterns under the seats, in addition to the usual side-lights of the carriage.

The drive of the long avenue by which the residence was approached had, of course, been carefully laid out, with due attention to the road-bed and to drainage, etc., but the horses plunged into mud the moment they passed from the estates, although the road thus entered upon was the great highway between the capital and Moscow.

At the time of which we write it had not been covered by the logs which afterwards rendered it more passable.

The progress of the carriage was nevertheless rapid, the greater part of the time, although it seemed a little slow, at an early stage of the journey, in comparison with the movements of a couple of horsemen, splendidly mounted, who overtook the carriage soon after it gained the highroad, and dashed past it at an easy pace, not a little to the annoyance of Roda's driver, and soon lost themselves in the distance.

"It seems that we are not the only persons travelling, mistress," said Mouska, breaking the somewhat gloomy silence which had been maintained until this moment.

Roda assented abstractedly. Her thoughts were busy with Captain Tyre.

"I should be better pleased with the two men if they had not been so well mounted, if they had not looked at us so sharply, if I had not seen the glitter of their arms, and if their faces had not been so entirely hidden under their hats," said Mrs. Pleffsky, all in one swift breath. "Considering the warm summer's night, they were muffled considerably more than is either necessary or pleasant!"

Roda laughed musically.

"What do you argue from those various circumstances, Mrs. Pleffsky?" she asked.

"Merely, mistress, that they may be spies or robbers!"

Roda laughed again, more heartily than before.

"You are nervous, Mrs. Pleffsky?" she commented. "I should simply say the two men are in ill-health, and everyone knows that the night air of the country at this season of the year is by no means a tonic!"

An improvement in the road here offered itself, and the carriage began moving at a sharper pace, the conversation becoming suspended.

For three or four miles the travellers went on at this encouraging gait, and then a succession of ruts and holes brought the horses to a walk.

"This is the first time you have been off the estates for nearly six months, mistress," then said Mrs. Pleffsky.

"Six months? Has it been only so long? How slowly the days wear away! It seems to me an eternity since my poor father was with us!"

Mrs. Pleffsky heaved a profound sigh.

"I shall be glad if nothing happens to make us regret that we have entered upon this journey!" she murmured. "For my part I am nervous as I can be. Every bush I see seems to shelter an enemy!"

"You have been shut up in one place too long, good Mrs. Pleffsky," observed Roda, kindly.

"You need a change!"

"The night is too bright and beautiful, Mother Pleffsky, for us to be gloomy and afraid," said the driver, leaning back in his seat and smiling reassuringly upon the anxious woman.

"And as to suspicious horsemen, I doubt if we shall see half a dozen persons before we reach the city."

"You had better attend to your horses, Stolbi," returned Mrs. Pleffsky, a little tartly. "and let speculation alone. If we get through to the palace of her majesty in safety, it will not be because you are too careful as a driver. Look at your horses!"

The warning did not come an instant too soon.

All three of the horses had suddenly shied at some object or movement by the side of the road, in the mid of some bushes, and, even as the shrill voice of Mrs. Pleffsky invited the closer attention of Stolbi to them, they broke away at a smart gallop, despite the depth of the mud and the roughness of the road.

It is probable that Stolbi would have been able to control the startled animals had it not been for the inevitable accident by which such critical moments are so naturally complicated.

Either one of the bits gave way, or one of the reins broke, or some similar event took place—no one was ever able to tell just how it happened—but the horses were quickly beyond the control of their driver, and running away with all the speed of their terror.

The two footmen at the rear of the carriage were the first to feel the effect of its furious motions.

They were thrown off into the mud with great violence, but not seriously injured. The stalwart youth upon the near horse was the next to vacate his post, either against his will or by a too keen sense of personal prudence.

Then Stolbi was hurled high in the air by the passage of the vehicle over some formidable obstruction, and came down in a watery ditch by the roadside.

And finally the carriage came to a stop in a profound mire that crossed the road, and the horses broke entirely clear of their load, quickly disappearing at full speed in the direction of the capital.

"Are you hurt, mistress?" asked Mrs. Pleffsky.

"No," answered Roda, "are you?"

A brief examination and inquiry evolved

the gratifying knowledge that none of the

occupants of the vehicle were seriously in-

jured.

Mrs. Pleffsky was not the kind of woman to cry "I told you so," or to croak and complain now that a piece of bad luck had actually happened.

She sprang lightly out into the mud, and brought some pieces of timber for the use of Roda from the nearest fence, the accident having happened in the near vicinity of one of those small farmhouses by which all the great routes in Russia were even in those days more or less densely lined.

"We shall have to alight, mistress," said Mrs. Pleffsky. "It will not only be a difficult job to pry the carriage out of the mud, but I am much mistaken if it is not considerably broken. The off forward wheel has certainly lost several spokes."

Roda descended, as did Mouska, reaching in safety a dry bank adjacent.

"We shall need help," said Roda. "Fortunately help is at hand!"

Several persons were seen approaching from the farmhouse, one of them bearing a lantern.

They had evidently been aroused by the noise caused by the runaway horses.

"Stolbi and the rest will soon overtake us, no doubt," said Mouska. "And if it should prove impossible to overtake our runaway horses, we can quickly replace them with others."

Roda readily assented.

Save for her anxieties in regard to the four faithful servants who had been unceremoniously deposited by the wayside, she was as cheerful as ever.

"Meanwhile, mistress," suggested Mrs. Pfeffsky, "as we must remain here an hour or two—or possibly longer—we had better take refuge in the farmhouse until the carriage is mended, or another is made ready."

The invitation was repeated by a couple of kindly-looking women, who had followed upon the heels of the men, and Roda accepted it thankfully, leaving the men busy in endeavouring to extricate the carriage.

The farmhouse was scrupulously neat and clean, and evidently the abode of real comfort.

The women in charge of it were polite and obliging, offering sundry refreshments, which were thankfully accepted.

Report was soon made that Stolbi and his comrades had arrived uninjured, and that the vehicle was in a fair way of being promptly ready for use again.

An hour thus glided away without particular heaviness, so great was the respect of the people at the little farmhouse for our heroine, and so much was she interested in their artless ways and rustic pleasures.

At the end of this time appeared Stolbi to say that the carriage had been repaired and that horses had been borrowed for the completion of the journey.

Roda at once returned to the vehicle, attended by her servants, and in a few minutes more was again speeding towards her destination.

For an hour thereafter everything went pleasantly.

The moon and stars had become somewhat obscured, and the road was now constantly bordered with trees, on account of the proximity of the capital, so that the light shed upon the scene was by no means as great as it had been, but no serious ruts were encountered, and nothing occurred to mar the hopeful animation by which Roda and her servants were constantly looking forward to the end of their journey.

"It seems that we are in a fair way to get through without further accident, mistress," said Mrs. Pfeffsky, breaking a long silence. "All I now fear is the bridge."

The bridge in question was one crossing a branch of the Neva, some five miles from the south-eastern outskirts of the city. It was a new structure, built of wood, and confessedly unsafe, the parapets being only temporary poles upon inefficient supporters. The bridge had taken the place of one recently burned, and was not yet completed.

"Stolbi has been here before," Roda contented herself with replying. "Let us hope that he will get us over safely."

The bridge was soon reached. It was not without the use of the lash that Stolbi overcame the repugnance of his horses to stepping upon it.

They reared and plunged as they dashed forward. They seemed equally alarmed at something upon the bridge, and at something upon the water beneath it.

Suddenly a ghostly-looking figure arose near the centre of the bridge, spreading out its arms and uttering a wild cry.

It was in vain that Stolbi exerted all his strength and skill in urging the frightened horses forward.

They sheered to the left, and in another moment had broken away the frail barrier, when horses, carriage, passengers, and all, went plunging into the river.

All save Roda!

At the very instant preceding the plunge the ghostly figure had leaped upon the steps of the carriage, seizing the girl in a vice-like grasp, and had dragged her out of the vehicle just in time to prevent her from sharing its terrific plunge into the river.

"Silence, girl!" enjoined the rescuer, as his fingers encircled Roda's throat. "Silence, or I will strangle you!"

The voice and mien were alike indicative of the identity of this man. Roda recognised him, on the instant. He was Colonel Dal!

"For six months I have been waiting for this moment," he hissed in her ear as he held her fast. "For six months I have been saying to myself that, when you ventured upon the least journey, you should fall into my hands—never to escape from them! Now to take you to a safe hiding-place, and my long watch is ended! Should any of your people escape, they will report you are drowned in the river! You see that I am at last triumphant!"

CHAPTER XIII.

RODA was not a little surprised by the advent upon the scene of Colonel Dal in the manner related.

She had never given him credit for being half so daring and capable, and still less for being so reckless of consequences.

Her first sentiment was one of deep and scornful anger, as she glanced after the struggling mass presented by the horses, the carriage and her attendants—the great wooden body of the vehicle floating like a boat—as the swift current of the river swept them away downstream, but her confidence in herself and in her servants enabled her to retain her entire self-possession.

"I don't wish to resort to violence, Miss Roda," pursued Colonel Dal, "but you must not be noisy. No screaming—no resistance! or you will force me to resort to very serious measures!"

How scornfully the clear eyes of Roda flashed defiance upon him.

"And this is the man that was lately recommended to me by the great Catherine!" she exclaimed, withering contempt. "Could anything be a finer commentary upon her majesty's letter to me than this vile conduct?"

"All is fair in love as in war, Miss Gradowsky," returned Dal, lightly, "and I have no doubt that the empress will justify the lengths to which I have been carried by the ardour of my passion."

"I think you do her majesty injustice," declared Roda. "That remains to be seen. Meanwhile, you say that I am your prisoner."

"Yes. As I am not the man to give you up, I naturally thought it about time for high-handed measures."

"All that is a matter of taste, or of the want of taste," said Roda, continuing to watch the movements of the struggling mass in the river and noting with great joy that a couple of boats were pushing off to the rescue. "I only want to see my way a little into your projects. You discovered that I was making this journey——"

"Easily enough! I had my spies on the watch near your residence——"

"A couple of men on horseback, for instance?"

"Oh, yes," admitted Dal, with a laugh. "You noticed they pursued you?"

"And these same men, or others like them, frightened my horses?"

Colonel Dal nodded.

"That ditch, too, in which your carriage stuck, was my invention," he said.

"But suppose I had been killed by the runaway?" asked Roda.

"Oh, there was no danger of that. There's too much mud around us."

"Or suppose my driver had been able to control my horses?"

"Even that was provided for. I had in view other proceedings."

No language can do justice to the scorn these avowals of infamy awakened in the soul of Roda against the unscrupulous villain.

"One word more," she said, "since you are so frankly jubilant over your supposed victory. You intended that all my attendants should perish, and that I should also be supposed to have been drowned by the 'accident' you have so heartlessly occasioned?"

"Certainly, certainly. But I am wasting valuable time. I have a carriage in waiting to carry you away. No outcry, no resistance. Come!"

"I am not coming, you will find. Keep your distance, sir. Hands off! Don't raise your hand against me, or you die!"

A richly mounted pistol flashed in the moonlight, its muzzle covering the heart of Dal, and vibrating to his every movement.

He recoiled in a rage as great as his amazement.

"While listening to your piling infamies," resumed Roda, "I have kept my eyes upon my people, and I see they are all being rescued. You may not be aware of the fact, but every man and woman of them can swim like a fish, and I have trained them all especially for just such an occasion as the present. They will all reach the shore in safety, and within five minutes will rally around me, ready at the least command to clip your worthless head from your shoulders. Stand back, sir! I am going down the bank of the river to meet them."

The feelings of Dal underwent a decided revulsion at these unexpected developments. It dawned upon his soul that he had not been half so effective as his eager hopes had promised.

Indeed, the captive was not at all at his mercy.

He did not dare to lay a finger upon her, or even place himself in her path.

In a word, he suddenly found that he had not done full justice to either her sense or her courage.

Holding her weapon ready for action, the undaunted girl moved rapidly in the direction she had indicated, continuing to keep her eyes fixed upon the exciting scene transpiring upon the river.

She saw that Stolbi had cut the horses clear from the carriage, that Mrs. Pfeffsky and Mouska had been picked up by the boatmen who had so unexpectedly presented themselves, that even the footmen and the postilion had saved themselves by clinging to the horses, and that the entire group of endangered persons and animals was now making the bank in safety, not more than a hundred yards below the bridge.

In fact, the whole "disaster" had failed of its intended purpose.

Beyond a simple scare and wetting, the attendants of our heroine were as ready for service as ever.

"I see that I have 'reckoned without mine host,' Miss Gradowsky," said Colonel Dal, who had turned pale with mortification and rage, as he saw how decidedly the affair had failed to respond to his expectations. "But you will find that I am not the powerless idiot you seem to imagine. It is clear that I am not going to get through with the ease and secrecy I thought. But I am none the less master. Since actual force is necessary, you shall see that I am prepared for a pitched battle."

He placed a whistle to his lips and blew upon it violently.

In quick response to this signal, several men started up from various bushes and hiding-places in the immediate vicinity, and came swarming around him.

"Oh, very well," commented Roda, coolly. "Since you want a fight, you shall have one!"

She did not pause or turn aside, but continued to advance towards the spot at which her attendants were now in the act of effecting a landing.

By the time she had reached the scene, they were all in safety upon the bank of the river.

Even the horses had been saved.

"I see that we can afford to be generous," said Roda, with icy scorn, as she advanced towards Dal, who, at the head of his ruffians, had

followed her menacingly. "Leave me alone, Colonel Dal, and you may go your ways in peace. I have no time to waste upon you. Take yourself off, and be careful to give us a wide berth hereafter!"

Dal sneered insolently. He had recovered his equilibrium.

"I set out to capture you, and I will," he responded. "Your blood be upon your own head, if you dare to offer further resistance! Seize her, men!"

His serfs advanced in a body.

"Oh, that is your mood, is it?" cried Roda. "You'll find your calculations subject to serious drawbacks. For instance—"

She had presented a double-barrelled pistol in each hand while speaking, and she now commenced firing rapidly.

Her first shot was at the nearest serf who, at a nod from his master, was advancing to seize her. He fell stone dead, with a ball through his brains.

The second shot traversed one of the legs of Colonel Dal, bringing him to the ground, where he lay helpless and anathematizing.

But if the serfs of Dal had been prompt to make a forward movement, they did not dare to fire upon Roda, or attempt to lay hands upon her, in face of the telling assistance of Stolbi, who had drawn a weapon similar to those Roda had presented, and placed himself between his mistress and her assailants.

"Seize her! Blight you!" yelled Dal.

The serfs advanced again in a body, but halted, crowding behind one another, as they saw the fatal weapons of our heroine covering them.

"Not a step farther, men!" commanded Roda, with a quiet firmness that compared singularly with the excited cries Dal was still bellowing. "At the least further sign of violence you die."

This attitude had strengthened that of Stolbi. With his revered young mistress setting him such an example, he would have willingly confronted the mouth of a cannon.

"Now for the two nearest horses, Stolbi," whispered Roda in the ears of her driver. "You and I must escape down the river. Secure the horses. I will cover our retreat."

Stolbi not only comprehended the possibility of this movement, but he was quick as a flash to enter upon it.

One of the serfs of Dal was busy with his master, another with their dead companion, and the rest were in a semi-demoralised condition.

It was a moment, therefore, for a daring and vigorous measure.

Firm of foot and of mien, with death in her glance, Roda held at bay the serfs of her unbecome admirer, preventing them from flanking her position, until Stolbi had secured the two horses in question.

Then she retreated rapidly in the same direction, occasionally pausing to menace and check the pursuers.

"Hang you, idiots!" cried Dal to his serfs. "Are you going to allow her to escape? Fire upon her! kill the horses!"

The words produced a desperate rush on the part of the assailants, but Roda turned, with quiet fury, and resumed firing, discharging the remaining barrels of her pistols with deadly effect, the two foremost of her pursuers falling dead in their tracks.

A third was killed by one of the two shots that Stolbi instantly added to those of his mistress.

In an instant, of course, the pursuit was checked, the pursuers being consternated and thrown into the greatest confusion.

"Now is our time, Stolbi," breathed Roda, as she took the bridle of one of the horses from his hand. "Away!"

Using the knee of her ready servitor for a step, she leaped into the saddle, and dashed away towards the capital. She was closely followed by Stolbi.

"Give them your Cossack yell of defiance," cried Roda.

The gallant fellow obeyed with a will. Only groans and confused cries responded.

"When Colonel Dal next makes war upon us," added our heroine, "he will count the cost. Forward, Stolbi!"

They rode like the wind!

The rage with which Colonel Dal looked after the couple was equalled only by his astonishment.

A survey of the dead serfs Roda had left behind her was quite sufficient to complete his misery.

"Who would have believed her capable of such ferocity?" he muttered. "A timid, shrinking girl, busy with her flowers and embroideries. I still seem to be dreaming—or should, if it were not for this infernal wound in my leg. When is that doctor coming?"

The question was answered, after a few minutes of wretchedness, by the appearance of the physician in person.

He had been sent for in all haste to his summer residence, which was fortunately close at hand, Colonel Dal being too badly terrified with his wound, which had bled profusely, to stir from the field of strife until the injury had received attention.

"You seem to have had a regular battle here, Colonel Dal," was the greeting of the doctor, as he surveyed the sufferer and the scene around him. "There are killed, wounded, and missing!"

"And I shall be glad to know to which category I belong, Dr. Paskoff," said Dal, assuming as cheerful an air as possible. "Hold your lanterns, some of you."

"What's the trouble?" asked Paskoff, rolling up his sleeves at sight of so much blood. "An eruption of Tartara?"

"No, sir, it's the catching of a Tartar that ails me," groaned Dal, wincing at the doctor's touch as that worthy began his examination of the injured leg. "As soon as you have done all you can, doctor, to repair the damages caused by the battle, I will tell you how the battle was fought."

Dr. Paskoff was a man of sense and learning, as well as of great standing and reputation, and he very quietly made a diagnosis of the injury.

"A close call, Colonel Dal," he reported. "A slight change in the course of the bullet would have been fatal. As it is, the wound is serious, but not dangerous. You will have to keep quiet a few days, or weeks, according as matters may turn, and care must be taken against inflammation and fever. Let some of your people take you home on a stretcher as soon and as carefully as possible. If you choose, you can tell me all about the difficulty when I see you in the morning. But you will do better to say nothing, as the whole business is likely to be a subject of judicial investigation, if there is any virtue in dead men."

Dal did not reply. He had all he could do to keep from groaning as Dr. Paskoff proceeded with necessary firmness to dress the wound.

By the time the task was completed a stretcher had been improvised by the surviving serfs, and no time was lost in acting upon the physician's advice to remove the patient to his residence.

Despite all the care that could be exercised the villain received many a painful jolt and wrench before he reached the residence of his aunt, the Countess Sabielin, although more than an hour was consumed in the journey. But the anguish of his body was as nothing to the anguish of his soul.

"Oh, I'll be revenged for this night's work," he kept saying to himself. "That girl will certainly see trouble!"

The defeated man had grown as desperate and dangerous as a ravening wolf!

(To be Continued.)

GAS shares have gone up rapidly, and those who bore them have made a considerable sum. A small gang of speculators has cleared over £20,000. The game has been cleverly played.

SCIENCE.

STAINING FLOORS.

A CONTEMPORARY commands the following method of staining floors in oak or walnut colours; Put 1oz. Vankye brown in oil, 3oz. pearlash, and 2 drms. dragon's blood, into an earthenware pan or large pitcher; pour on the mixture 1 quart of boiling water; stir with a piece of wood. The stain may be used hot or cold. The boards should be smoothed with a plane and glass-papered; fill up the cracks with plaster of Paris; take a stiff brush, dip in the stain, and rub this in well; the brush should not be rubbed across the boards, but lengthwise. Only a small piece should be done at a time. By rubbing in one place more than another an appearance of oak or walnut is more apparent; when quite dry the boards should be sized with glue size, made by boiling glue in water, and brushing it in the boards hot. When this is dry the boards should be papered smooth and varnished with brown hard varnish or oak varnish; the brown hard varnish will wear better and dry quicker; it should be thinned with a little French polish, and laid on the boards with a smooth brush.

NEW CAUSTICS.

Two caustics, which promise to be most valuable, have recently been introduced to the notice of the medical profession by Dr. B. W. Richardson. They are sodium and potassium alcohols. When applied to the skin these alcohols are said to cause "gradual destruction of tissue, which may be so moderated as hardly to be perceptible, and may be so intensified as to act almost like a cutting instrument."

These caustics have the advantage that they will dissolve opium, like ordinary alcohol, and also that their action can be stopped immediately by dropping on the eschar a little chloroform, which decomposes the caustic into chloride of the metal and triethyl ether, which is inert locally.

NITRIC ACID PRODUCED BY THE ELECTRIC LIGHT.

MR. T. WILLS, F.C.S., has been making some experiments on the production of oxides of nitrogen in the electric arc. The atmosphere of course consists mainly of oxygen and nitrogen, but simply in a state of mechanical mixture; if these gases become chemically combined, they form several oxides of nitrogen, most of which are strong and corrosive acids. At a high temperature small quantities of these gases can be made to unite. This is the case when electric sparks are passed through air; also during the combustion in air in a very hot flame, such as that of hydrogen; it therefore seemed probable that, as the temperature of the electric arc is undoubtedly very high, nitric acid, or some other oxide of nitrogen, might be produced by the electric light.

The first experiment was rather surprising. A glass cylinder placed over an electric lamp (Foucault's regulator) for two minutes, and afterwards examined, was seen to contain a perceptible amount of red fumes, due to peroxide of nitrogen (N_2O_4). The air surrounding the lamp was next drawn through a solution of potash, and the amount of nitric acid estimated; this gave 10 to 12 grains of nitric acid produced per hour (it may eventually prove to be more, the difficulty being to collect the whole of it).

The next step in the research will be to examine the various forms of electric light, with a view to determine the amount of nitric acid produced by each. One of the advantages heretofore claimed for the electric light over gas light has been that the products of the combustion of the former were harmless, while gas light produces the deadly carbonic acid.

SUCCESSFUL experiments to determine the precise nature of the light indispensable to growing plants have been made in France by Mons. Bert.



[HER VALENTINE.]

LILLIE HAREWOOD'S VALENTINE.

Oh, stately maid of stature tall,
And lips that seldom move!
Who knows the secret that will thrall,
And turn that look to love?

THEY used to say in the work-rooms of Madame Gloire de Dijon, the famous Court milliner and dressmaker in Grosvenor Square—whose Court and fancy dresses were the marvel and admiration of all beholding them—that there never was so strange and incomprehensible a girl as Lillie Harewood.

Lillie too! the very name had a sweet, musical, flower-like significance, associated with roamings amid the beauties of nature, admiration of wild bluebells and dog-roses, and a sort of mild exultation over pastoral delights—a cattle-like appreciation of greenness and heather; but this Lillie, with her beauty and coldness, was apparently a haughty maiden, with a trick of elevating her eyebrows when her companions addressed her, scarcely caring much to answer, taking in fact a deliberate time over it in that indifferent sort of way which they inwardly resented, without quite comprehending.

Who was this Lillie Harewood, living in a secluded world of her own, with her statuesque grace and perfect secularity?

Lillie could talk German and French to any of Madame Gloire de Dijon's customers—not heavy, British French, in which all the g's and the u's were twangy and sepulchral, but clever, flowing Parisian French, that really seemed to justify the truth of what Lillie herself had care-

lessly informed them, that she had once been extremely rich, had been educated in Paris, and kept a saddle-horse and lady's maid.

It was rather a descent, they admitted, this coming down to daily drudgery at Madame Gloire de Dijon's establishment when the season was at its height, to make Court dresses for the reigning belles in a crowded work-room in the warm and leafy month of June; but they were quite sure Lillie spoke the truth, because to-day when a splendid, grand piano emerged from a van of Messrs. Collard and Collard (a purchase doubtless of Madame Gloire de Dijon), and after considerable difficulty, had been conveyed to the drawing-room, Madame had entered and patted Lillie (who was her evident favourite) on the shoulder, asking her if she would be kind enough to try its tone and quality, as it was a very expensive instrument, although not quite new. And Madame was a person who seldom played experiments on the wrong individual.

While the girl, smiling a little, had just elevated her eyebrows, as was her custom when spoken to, and throwing aside a pale lemon-coloured satin dress she was re-trimming for a great lady, the wife of an ambassador, and a grand duchess into the bargain, followed Madame out of the room with evident interest and satisfaction.

And there was Mary Davison, a tall, sallow girl, with a weak spine, at the machine who boasted her papa was pianoforte tuner to the Queen, and that she had once performed at a public concert in aid of the "Distressed

Scriveners' Society," looking as sour as could be at the honour offered to Lillie.

The pianoforte had been placed in the back drawing-room, and as the young ladies complained of the heat and closeness of the upper rooms, Madame had good-naturedly allowed them to work in the drawing-room on this identical afternoon when the piano arrived, so as the folding doors were thrown open, they could see Lillie smoothing back her dainty white linen cuffs, edged with Valenciennes lace, ere running her fingers over the keys.

Madame Gloire de Dijon, who knew a good deal of Lillie's antecedents, and had made her dresses ever since she had renounced pinafores and a coral necklace, had placed one hand confidingly on the girl's shoulder, and awaited the first crash and dash on the keys with evident anxiety.

"Continue with your work, young ladies," she now called out, as she noticed several necks and heads craning round the folding doors, trying to get a view of Lillie Harewood at the piano.

"I don't believe she can play a note," said Mary Davison, working her "noiseless" machine rather rapidly; "she may be able to make a flourish and all that, because my papa plays by ear several beautiful runs and chants, but he cannot read music. It's just like that Miss Harewood's cheek and bounce, always putting herself forward before all of us."

But no sound came from the instrument. They only saw a pale, tearful face bend lower and lower over the keys, and then Lillie (always incomprehensible and erratic) slowly kissed the notes as she turned to Madame Gloire de Dijon, and said:

"Pardon me, dear madame, but at the first glance at the gift my dear father gave me in happier times I could not help thinking—"

"This was your piano, child?" cried Madame, smiling a little behind her handkerchief. "Ah, you remember, perhaps, the first time you sat down to it, on your birthday, wearing that lovely pale pink silk, trimmed en revers with 'claire de lune' tulle which I made you in Paris."

"Her piano!" echoed the chorus in the other room. "Well, that's neat, isn't it?"

"Just a get off from playing it, of course," said Mary Davison, re-threading her machine needle.

"Perhaps you would rather not try the piano just now, my dear," Madame said, kindly, touching Lillie's arm.

"On the contrary," said Lillie, bravely, lifting her head and speaking with her habitual firmness, "I should like to hear its sounds again."

She ran her fingers lightly over the keys, and played with perfect brilliance and taste the sonata pastorale of Beethoven, giving the most exquisite finish to the difficult andante at the end. Then she rose and quietly resumed her work. Madame Gloire de Dijon followed the girl, and said:

"You play superbly, mademoiselle. One could tell you were a pupil of Findeison. Your playing is fit for the public market."

"Which is long since overstocked, and one cannot starve," said Lillie, quietly, taking up the dress she was re-trimming for the superb ambassadress, and this time, as she lifted the dress, a note fell from the silken pocket. It looked like an old valentine. Lillie did not at first regard the missive, but pushed it aside with her foot.

"You must have practised a great deal," said Mary Davison, leaning forward, envying Lillie's facility of expression; "but I could always make a good effect and please people without all that running fire and scales and things. My papa used to say I'd natural genius for music."

"It's a pity you ever came to a work-room then," said Lillie, without looking up; "but if Madame does not object for once in a way, please give us some specimen of your papa's judgment."

Madame, amused, readily assented. She was

a robust woman of forty, very rich and very amiable, and had just herself received a magnificent valentine—a pretty mother-of-pearl purse, quite full of sovereigns, and with a charming device on the snap. Surely this was better than all the nonsensical elves and fairies silly swains sent their loves, for this remembrance combined the practical as well as the sentimental view of things. It would have made anyone good-natured on St. Valentine's Day.

In the meantime Lillie had examined the envelope at her feet, and a deadly pallor spread itself over her features. She was very lovely in her simply-made dark grey cashmere dress relieved with a faint dash of cherry colour at the throat; tall and slender, with the grace of an empress. Her rich, dark brown hair was braided in heavy masses of plaits around her exquisitely-modelled head; not small enough perhaps to be quite fashionable, for it was grandly developed with imagination, talents and capacities; a head like Berenice, full of thought and intellect.

Why then had Lillie drifted into a workroom in Grosvenor Square? Were brains not marketable? Not particularly, when all that is average, vulgar and commonplace "pays" better than any high artistic work. Lillie's pound a week was at least secure and safely earned in Grosvenor Square, and went to pay for many solid comforts for her mamma, who was a weak, inane specimen of womanhood, given to much tearfulness at the results of their fallen greatness, for Lillie's father had been ruined through the failure of a bank, and he had since died of paralysis.

Lillie, picking up the note, and placing it in her breast, sought Madame Gloire de Dijon, who was in her boudoir counting over her sovereigns and smoking a cigarette.

"Excuse me troubling you, madame, but mamma wished to know if you had found her a customer for her pearls? And also if you had sold her old Brussels point; she wanted, you know, thirty-five guineas for the two smaller flourcuses."

"Exactly, chère demoiselle. Well, I have had an offer of thirty-two pounds, would your mamma take that?"

Lillie reflected, and she was also surprised. She had never seen madame enjoying a cigarette before.

"Tiens! is not this a pretty purse?" said madame, pushing her valentine over for Lillie's inspection, "and quite full too of gold. Ah, never refuse gold, mees. You feel the want of it now, do you not?"

Lillie laughed, blushed and returned to the subject of the flourcuses.

"I think, madame, that is a good offer, and I am nearly sure mamma will accept it."

"It is an excellent offer, and it is I who make it," said madame, with magnificent effusion. "The flourcuses look ravishing on my blue velvet for the theatre."

"You, madame?"
"Why not? I made hay always when the sun shone. I am rich. I please myself. Bah! women were only sent into this wicked world to amuse themselves and other people," leaning back in her luxurious chair and puffing away at her cigarette.

Lillie was silent. Madame's theories were almost as startling as the smoke.

"I tell you what, dear child. I give you a holiday—there, put on your hat and run away home. I know all you young ladies are longing to rush at the postmen. Well, I've no objection. I rather think a nice valentine awaits you."

"A thousand thanks, madame," said Lillie, glad to retire.

But there was the letter in her breast, still wounding her with a strange, sick pain. Lillie knew what she could do; treachery seemed to reign everywhere, but she will not be so weak as to cherish a passionate affection, even for a French count, provided he were false and capable of making love and sending valentines to Madame la grande Duchesse of Bohm, when all the time he vowed he adored his darling little English girl.

"If Ferdinand is a traitor," said Lillie, taking

out the unlucky missive, "and sends valentines to this lady, he shall know Lillie Harewood can survive his desertion," said Lillie, still bravely, if her poor lips twitched and she forced back her tears.

She ran to the dressing-room, seized her hat, and fastened the elastic, throwing the letter down on a chair. Yes, it was decidedly Ferdinand's handwriting. Did she not know every line, as if they were portraits; the dear writing so elegant and refined. It was a temptation Lillie could not resist, to shake out the valentine.

It was a dainty device; one of Eugène Rimmel's angels and seraphs tipped with golden sheen, and Birds of Paradise hovering about a Bower.

Oh, the Bower and the hour,
Eden's bowers in flower.

There was also a silver heart, which Lillie considered bore fatal testimony to Ferdinand's disloyalty.

The duchess could not have excessively prized it, or she would never have left it in the pocket of a dress to be re-trimmed at Madame Gloire de Dijon's; but then, do grande dames prize anything but themselves?

Lillie felt already hardened against Count Ferdinand by this revelation. Had she not offered to release him from his engagement now she was poor? And had he not with a generosity and chivalry that did credit to his nation and sex, distinctly vowed he adored "la petite" so mignon and brave; the idol of his soul; the light of his life, etc., etc.? And now from the valentine slipped a small note, which Lillie, pale and breathless, thus deciphered:

"CAELTON CLUB, Feb. 14th, 1875.

"DEAREST MARGUERITE,

"To prove to you I am not so utterly lost for love for the sake of the dear little English flower as to forget your existence, I send the enclosed with every expression of affection,

"A toi toujours,

"FERDINAND.

The letter and valentine fell from Lillie's hand with a cry, and then she said, her proud courage returning:

"He shall know to-day I have discovered all; and yet I loved him so; it is hard—too hard—it cuts my very soul, but perhaps better know the truth now than later." Then, with an after-thought, "so much for a French count."

She returned to the work-room; her eyes dry. She looked at the piano in a kind of dull stupor, packed up the grand duchess's dress, which she had finished, replaced the note and valentine in the pocket and went out into the warm light of day.

The season was now at its height, and Lillie walked very rapidly towards the fashionable square in which the duchess resided, and as she crossed the road she saw a gentleman driving a pair of spirited horses rein them up at the kerb-stone, almost at the same moment as she knocked at the door.

"Could I speak a word to the duchess?" asked Lillie of the butler, who showed her into the library. Madame Gloire de Dijon expected a cheque on account, and this Lillie was commissioned to explain.

But presently someone entered: the Count Ferdinand, who uttered a joyful exclamation at seeing her.

"Why, my darling, this is a surprise; but how pale you look! What has happened?" Then drawing her towards him: "Did you not receive a little present from me to-day?"

"No," said Lillie, moving away from him and leaning over the parcel, "and I shall never accept another present from the Count Ferdinand de Sequira."

"Lillie, you can speak to me like this—to the man who adores you—whose every hour is passed in thinking of you?"

"Oh, be truthful at last with me. Count say this is the Lillie Harewood I flirted with in Paris in her rich days; now she is poor—"

"She is dearer to me than ever. My angel,

have I not given every proof a man can of his constancy and devotion?"

"No, not quite, Count," said Lillie, unfastening the parcel and taking out the letter and valentine. "These little souvenirs were reserved as crowning proofs of your sincerity."

He tore them from her hand, opened them, and after reading the note quietly placed it and the valentine in his Russia leather pocket-book, Lillie studying his expression and eagerly watching every movement.

"I admit appearances are decidedly against me," he said, smiling again into Lillie's sad eyes. "But say—am I never to be forgiven?"

"We do not make a jest of love as you seem to do," said Lillie, severely, white and cold with emotion. "You are free! I will never see you again."

"Mon Dieu! You prefer someone else, then?—your John Bull friend Mr. Ashwood, the rich Birmingham manufacturer, who offered to settle three hundred a year on your mamma and ditto on yourself if you would give me up."

"Read that letter to your Marguerite, Count Ferdinand," said Lillie, "and leave poor Mr. Ashwood out of the question."

"I have read it, ma belle! I know it by heart. It's quite harmless."

"Farewell, then," said Lillie, holding out her little hand; "this is St. Valentine's Day. It seems hard for all these dreadful things to happen when I hoped to be so, so happy."

"No, Lillie, there must be no farewell between you and me, or, at least, grant me one last request. Suppose I admit I am a villain, still villains have a right to plead, so grant me this favour, dearest: Drive with me to Arundell's, in Regent Street, and I'll there make a true confession of all."

"But the dress, and the duchess, and Madame Gloire de Dijon's message?"

"Say you'll call in an hour. It's all right Miss Harewood. Come out and admire the shops, and order some costumes and another mantle and the last 'sweet' thing in hats. They will look tempting as we drive along in the phaeton. Don't look at me, darling, as if I were the man Charon engages to row people over the classical river. Why, your poor little boots are all splashed with walking so far."

Lillie regarded her boots in a sort of vague despair, so different were they from the pretty chaussures when she had walked down the fashionable boulevards in Paris with the Count Ferdinand by her side, and he had brought her offerings of delicious sweetmeats and adorable bonbonnières. Autres temps! autres mœurs!

Poor Lillie had to submit to atmospheric changes without the solace of cabs, and to endure the various batteries of mud splashed on her cloak and boots from omnibuses, carriages, and carts.

The count's horses did credit to their master's choice. Their black coats shone with glossy beauty as they champed their bits and pawed the ground. Lillie knew that her dark, shabby cloak was not in character with the phaeton's style, but what did the phaeton or its owner concern her, for that matter?

A long series of red and golden summers when she would have to sit hours and hours making dresses for other women to enjoy at charming parties, presented themselves to her mental vision, and Lillie was very silent.

Arriving at Arundell's the count, flinging the reins to his groom, descended, assisted Lillie off the high step (she jumped very gracefully), and escorted her into the fashionable confectioner's, where he ordered two glasses of cherry brandy and some Bath buns, insisting, also, on Lillie swallowing the cherry brandy—a last request, he said, smilingly.

There being no one at present in a small room reserved for private dinners, he suggested to Lillie that they took possession of this sanctum, as he had a very important communication to make. So as they entered the room he said, turning to contemplate a picture of Sisera and Jael done in Berlin wools, the objectionable hammer being very neatly executed:

"By-the-bye, didn't you receive a piano this

afternoon? A sound, substantial valentine, was it not?"

Lillie started to her feet.

"You sent me my dear old piano, and yet could be so cruel and so deceitful as to write that wicked letter?"

Still contemplating the terrible Jael, the count answered, pulling his moustache:

"Why, my dear little girl, may not a man send a valentine to his sister, especially when he remembers to bring his Lillie this?"

And he opened a dark green leather case, in which a magnificent diamond ring sparkled, and drawing Lillie towards him, strained her to his breast, raining kisses on her lips, while Lillie, sobbing for her re-found happiness, forgot to admire her valentine as he vowed she was the dearest being on earth to him, which, strange to say, was perfectly true, and certainly repulsed the popular theory of the innate deception of all foreign noblemen in general, and French counts in particular.

"This is your valentine, my Lillie," he said, in his bright, charming way, holding the cherry brandy for her to finish, "and to-morrow you will be my wife."

A. C.

THE MANAGEMENT OF INFANTS.

BABIES are little things, but it is not a little thing to know how to dress and undress them properly. It looks so easy to do, as the mother sees the monthly nurse turn him about, and pats him, and then lays him comfortably by your side; but it is in reality hard for the young mother herself, and on it so much of the comfort and good behaviour of the baby depends during the day.

In the first place, the mother should see that everything that she will need during the dressing process is just at hand; she should never have to rise from her seat, from the time she takes the infant in her arms, to wash him, till his toilet is quite completed.

With a very young child, the most important thing to see is the baby's navel. With many infants, this is a long while in healing, and if neglected for a single day, the worst results may ensue. It may become inflamed from the mere friction of the clothing being too loose upon it, or from leaving off the band too soon; this should be kept on long after the part looks well; it will often burst into bleeding, after a violent fit of crying, and from whatever cause it does so, it should be attended to, at once, for a rupture is often a life-long misfortune.

A piece of scorched linen rag, or a cut open raisin are two of the simplest domestic remedies; but the rupture will often "start" or protrude, with no apparent cause. In such a case get some tea-lead, such as can be procured from the tea chest of any grocer; press it smoothly out, and fold four thicknesses of it an inch and a half square, cover it with a piece of soft linen, and then bind it firmly, but not too tightly, over the navel. Look at it occasionally, to see that it has not altered its position. Tea-lead is good for a compress, because it is firm, and yielding, at the same time: but if that is not procurable, four or five thicknesses of soft linen rag, placed beneath a piece of card-board, about the size of a shilling, will answer the purpose very well. Many persons use a band of new flannel, instead of a linen band, around the body, thinking it healthier, but the flannel will sometimes irritate the tender flesh, and linen seems cleanlier.

In washing baby, it is well to accustom him to be put into a tiny bath, almost from his birth; the mother should hold him firmly, but gently, with her left hand, and use the right one to cleanse the "creases," and wash him with. This is better even than a soft sponge, or "washrag."

Baby does not need much soap; once in two days is enough for his head; less frequently for his face. But the lower part of the body requires it once a day; the very best white curd or Castle soap should be used; any strong or fancy soap is injurious to the skin.

All good mothers or nurses have a large flannel apron, or small blanket, the size of a crib blanket, which is kept expressly to wash baby in, so as soon as he has been properly bathed, (which should be gently, but rather quickly, done in water with the chill taken off) he should be lifted into the flannel apron, and covered up in it as quickly as possible, whilst his face is wiped, and his head rubbed dry, with a soft, old linen towel; most children like this part of the dressing process. Be sure to keep him covered as much as possible, to prevent him from getting chilled.

It is a good plan to talk to him incessantly; to laugh and coo to him, to divert his attention from any little proceeding he does not quite approve of. Do not let him cry; he most probably will not do so if the mother does not dawdle, and he is talked to; this simple means will often keep a poor, young mother from crying as well as the baby; the attention of both is diverted.

Wipe the body with a clean, soft towel, leaving not a wrinkle untouched; slip something dry under him, and cover him up again until quite ready to put his clothes on him. All this seems needlessly explanatory, but it is whilst being dressed that the baby so often takes violent colds, and the careless or dawdling mother wonders how he got it. If the poor little creature is left wet and shivering whilst a cold towel is hunted for, which ought to have been warming by the fire, it cannot but help being the victim of catarrhs, earaches and inflamed eyes. After being well washed and well dried, baby should be well powdered, not only here and there, but well, in all the creases, and as it is so difficult now to obtain baby powder, very finely pulverised starch, dusted through a piece of book-muslin, is an excellent substitute.

Baby's clothes should always be slightly warmed, or "aired," before putting them on him. Some people, with a desire to make their babies "hardy," put on the clothes that have of course been thoroughly dried when coming from the wash, but which, from lying in the drawer, have become chilled, and so strike cold to the delicate flesh.

In clothing a baby, remember that there are three parts of his body that must be kept warm — his chest, bowels and feet; keep the head as cool as possible.

Use as few pins as possible, in dressing baby. "Safety" pins are the only safe ones; for some pins must be used, as strings or buttons will not always answer. Some mothers sew the clothes on young infants.

In case of hard crying spells after dressing, it is always wise to investigate the cause. The clothes may be too tight, a pin may stick, or some rough edge may torture the poor little one.

FACETIA.

ANY GUARD IN A STRIKE.
(A Midland Specimen—Nautical Variety—
"not Previously Acquainted with
Railway Work."

NAUTICAL GUARD (roaring): "Avast, there! Didn't I tell yer theer wasn't no room in the foks'! Lay to midships, can't yer? (Sotto Voce): Blest if I ever see sich a lot of lubbers!" —Funny Folks.

FINANCING.

TOMMY: "Oh, grand'pa, dear, I've been counting what my Christmas presents will cost, and it just comes to ten shillings. I've saved up one-and-sevenpence. Can you advise me where to get the rest?" —Punch.

COMING DOWN.

THE Electric Lamps in Billingsgate. They "throw a glare on the fish," and are unfavourable to the complexions of the fish-sellers, who, under this uncompromising illuminating power, might be detected in blushing for the

manoeuvres of the fish-ring, and the extortionate retail prices charged by the fishmongers.

—Punch.

PIE, FOR SHAME, SANDY!

(A Rebut to Glasgow Bank Sufferers.)
A HAIR of the dog that bit you: Starting a lottery to pay your losses at unlimited loss!

—Punch.

FROZEN OUT!

Bank Directors (log).
We kept a bank in a busy city,

Till the stupid depositors got in a

stew,

Shutting up—
the more's the pity—

And now "We've got no work to do."

Gas Directors.

The soft electric brilliance gleaming

In every thoroughfare now we view;

If this goes on while we are dreaming,

We shall find "We've got no work to

do."

Small Traders.

Folks highly praise Co-operation,

But we from the counter answer,

"Pooh!"

Co-operation will ruin the nation,

When tradesmen 'have got no work

to do."

Co-operative Clergy.

In vain with trade the clergymen

grapples,

And preaches to many an empty

pew;

Our congregations are filling the

chapels,

And now "We've got no work to

do."

Legitimate Actors.

Although our task was hard and exact-

ing,

To the stage we were ever loyal and

true;

But since lords and ladies have taken

to acting,

We find "We've got no work to do."

—Funny Folks.

INCONGRUOUS PRIZES.

FOLLOWING the fashion set us by several inventive French prints, we have succeeded in disinterring a few ticket-holders who have won incongruous prizes in the Exhibition Lottery:

A chalice and paten have gone to the holder of ticket Number 379,892, Series II., a prominent member of the Protestant League, and a leader of the Hatcham iconoclasts.

A delicate Sèvres vase goes to Number 944,497, Series I., the owner of which, Master Aityerold, has smashed a cream-jug, a glass fish-globe, three windows, and his father's watch-glass.

Number 196,382, Series XI., favours Major Hardoff Yearing—the deafest man in Park Lane—with a fine-toned organ.

The winner, by Number 767,780, Series V., of a rich fur mantle, is 'Ottun, King of the Ayntit-Sultree Tribe of Central Africa.'

Can it be true that Mr. John Bright, as the holder of Number 588,276, Series X., wins "a splendid sabre, with a splendid Toledo blade?"

It is rumoured—and the thing is an example of Dame Fortune's eccentric freaks—that Number 054,664, Series VIII., entitles her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria to—an Indian shawl!

—Funny Folks.

A SLIGHT MISTAKE.

"WELL, nurse, did you find your way to St. James's Hall?"

"Yes, thank you, sir."

"And how did you like the Christy Minstrels?"

"Well, I was rather disappointed, sir. There was one of them as played on the violins—he was beautiful, while three others kep' on fiddlin' as I thought they'd never leave off; and then a gentleman up and sang, and then a lady played

on the pibanner. But none of their faces was blacked!"

(With Mr. Punch's apologies to Messrs. Joachim, Zerbini, Ries, Piatti, and others.)

—Punch.

MOTTO FOR THE CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE FOR NORTH NORFOLK.

("Tityre, tu patula recubans sub tegmine Fagi.")

"BUCOLIC Birkbeck, 'neath big beech recline,

And 'ditto' swear to all he may opine."

—Punch.

WHERE IT BEGAN.

WILLIAM came running into the house the other day and asked, eagerly:

"Where does charity begin?"

"At home," was replied, "in the words of the prophet."

"Not by a good deal," replied the boy. "It begins at sea (C.)."

NINE RULES FOR YOUNG MEN.

ALWAYS pick up a hot poker by the cold end. Never spend your money when you can get things for nothing.

Do not despise a sixpenny cigar or a good dinner because another man pays for it.

Remember that it costs more to go to a high-priced theatre than it does to take a back pew in a free church.

Nothing is troublesome to you that other people do for you willingly.

Never pay the man to-day you can put off till to-morrow.

Never trouble yourself to do for another what he can do just as well for himself.

Never buy what you don't want, simply because the man says he is just out of it.

Do not poultice your own elbow for the boil on another man's neck.

HIS DUCKS.

"My darling," says Mr. Sadrake, who had been ostensibly duck-shooting all the day and night previous, "did the office boy bring you those ducks I shot, as I told him?"

"No, sir, he did not," replied Mrs. S., in an icy and appalling manner; "but the butcher's boy has been here to say that, as he cannot fill your order for wild ducks to-day, he sends you a half dozen tame ones instead."

Tableau.

HIS WISH.

A LITTLE boy from London went into the country visiting. He had a bowl of bread and milk. He tasted it, and then hesitated a moment, when his mother asked him if he didn't like it, to which he replied, smacking his lips:

"Yes, ma'am. I was wishing our milkman would keep a cow."

STAUNCH.

OLD LADY (who had been buying eggs): "Deed, Mr. McTreacle, butcher's meat's sae dear now-a-days ah'm no able to buy 't!"

GROCER: "You should turn a vegetarian."

OLD LADY: "A vegeetarian!—Na, na: ah was born an' brocht up i' the Free Kirk, an' a'm no gaun ta change ma reeleegion i' m' auld days!"

—Punch.

UNSEEMLY INTERRUPTION.

THE NEW FOOTMAN (stentorously): "Mrs. Montgomery Jenkins's carriage!"

MRS. M'ONTGOMERY JENKINS: "A—tell the coachman, to wait."

NEW FOOTMAN: "Please, ma'am, he says he can't. He a'ys he's got another job at twenty minnits past eleven!"

—Punch.

ST'ATISTICS.

PEERS AND BAR. 'NETS.—It may be interesting to mention th' at the whole body of the peerage comprises at the present time no less than 580 members, including 5 Royal dukes,

28 dukes, 33 marquises, 205 earls, 57 viscounts, and 252 barons. The creation of the dukes vary from Norfolk in 1483 to Westminster in 1874, of the marquises from Winchester in 1551 to Abergavenny in 1876, of the earls from Crawford in 1398 to Cairns in 1878, of the viscounts from Hereford in 1549 to Cranbrook in 1878, and of the barons from Le Despencer in 1264 to Norton in 1878. Of the baronetage there are no less than 862 members, of whose baroneties 33 were created by James I., 81 by Charles I., 101 by Charles II., 16 by James II., 19 by Queen Anne, 10 by George I., 26 by George II., 406 by George III., 40 by George IV., 47 by William IV., and 153 by Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

FOUND AT LAST.

So, at last, I am loved, whom all men thought

In bachelordhood would fade away,
And whose shy, sad manners so seldom brought

In the ways of women to coyly stray!
And she who loves me to be the same

Who first fired my heart with the strange, strong heat,
Like an incense caught from an altar's flame,

Which so many before me have found so sweet!

And that, too, even when age was nigh,
And the grey locks hourly clustering!

How came it about, you ask, that I,
In life's dull Autumn, should find my Spring?

I know not; only that days and days
I hovered near her with, now and then,

A vague, wild hope that her angel gaze
Had singled me from the rest of men.

And, at last, when, giddy and overborne
By a passion that conquered my awkwardness,

I trembled down at her feet one morn,
And poured out my love and my soul's distress,

Why, amid her blushes and blinding dew
Of joyous tears, but with dimples rife,

The light of heaven came blazing through,
And sunrise burst on my darkened life!

She loves me! loves me! I care no more
For the twittings of friends by word or look.

I have broken into the noblest lore,
I have mastered the magic of Love's own book.

She loves me! loves me! I can drink, drink deep
Of the nectar of life so long withheld;

I am one with those whom it makes to leap,
I am kin with those whom it thrilled of old!

I feel that no hour of all the years
That have passed unloved hath wasted been,

For my future spreads, through the rush of tears,

Like April's thitherside, fresh and green.
There is bridal music in all the air,

My bachelor days are a dream gone by;
Her image is here, there, everywhere,

I am loved, blessed, happy before I die!

N. D. U.

GEMS.

THERE are many who, in their eager desire for the end, overlook the difficulties in the way; there is another class who see nothing else. The first class may sometimes fail; the latter rarely succeed.

LABOUR, honest labour, is mighty and beau-

tiful. Activity is the ruling element of life and its highest relish. Luxuries and conquests are the result of labour; we can imagine nothing without it.

ALWAYS remember no one can debase you but yourself. Slander, satire, falsehood, injustice—these can never rob you of your manhood.

Boys, the habit of obeying at once is one of the best habits in the world. It makes prompt, active, energetic business men. Why, it is the "now at once, right off," that leads all the work in the world, and gets pay for it, too.

NOTHING is arbitrary, nothing is isolated in beauty. It depends for ever on the necessary and useful.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

TREATMENT OF SOFT CORNS.—A small piece of sal ammoniac dissolved in two tablespoonfuls of spirits of wine, and the same quantity of water. Saturate a small piece of sponge or linen rag, and place it between the toes, changing it twice a day. This will cause the skin to harden, and the corn may be easily extracted.

MUSTARD PLASTERS.—By using syrup or molasses for mustard plasters, they will keep soft and flexible, and not dry up, and become hard, as when mixed with water. A thin paper or fine cloth should come between the plaster and the skin. The strength of the plaster may be varied by the addition of more or less flour.

FLAXSEED TEA.—Take three tablespoonfuls of linseed, about one pint of water, and boil for ten minutes. Strain off the water, put in a jug with two lemons, cut in thin slices; put also some brown sugar. A wineglassful of wine is an improvement. This has been found most nourishing for invalids.

COLD CREAM.—One half ounce of white wax; one half ounce of spermaceti; three ounces oil of almonds; one ounce of glycerine; two ounces of rose water. Melt the four first ingredients gently together, and when nearly cold, stir in the rose water and a few drops of otto of roses.

BAKED MILK.—Put half a gallon of milk into a jar, and tie it down with writing paper. Let it stand in a moderately warm oven about eight or ten hours. It will then be of the consistency of cream. It is used by persons who are weak and consumptive.

MISCELLANEOUS.

A NOVEL item appears in the list of cargo brought by the White Star steamer "Adriatic," viz., 466 cases of silkworms' eggs. They were sent from Yokohama, via New York, and were at once despatched to London. The weight was about 27,500lb. gross. The price of silkworms' eggs was not long ago quoted at about 20s. per pound.

VALUABLE WEDDING PRESENT.—At the recent wedding of Major Attwood, of the United States army, now stationed at San Antonio, Texas, to the daughter of Richard King, of St. Louis, "the Cattle King of the West," the bride's father presented the bridegroom with the characteristic but rather awkward gift of 80,000 head of cattle.

THE value of the site on which Christ's Hospital stands is said to be £600,300. It is an additional reason why the school should be transported to the country and its benefits widely extended.

BISHOP and doctor agree. Bishop Fraser of Manchester objects to smoking on the part of the young. The "Lancet" objects to it for old and young in cold weather. It says that the smoker, fortifying himself against fog and damp with the cheerful glow of a cigar in front of his face and the fragrant incense beguiling his nostrils, is apt to forget that nicotine is a potent depressor of the heart's action. Depressed action produces cold, and cold in another article is proved to produce suicide. So smoking in winter leads direct to suicide.

CONTENTS.

Page.	Page.		
CHRISTINE'S REVENGE; OR, O'HARA'S WIFE	388	CORRESPONDENCE	408
STRONG TEMPTATION: A TALE OF TWO SISTERS	389	LADY VIOLET'S VICTIMS COMMENCED IN	308
THE BEST THING A BOY CAN HAVE	391	THE BARONESS OF THE ISLES	392
THE BARONESS OF THE ISLES COMMENCED IN	393	STRONG TEMPTATION: A TALE OF TWO SISTERS, COMMENCED IN	314
TRIFLED WITH FIRE	393	CHRISTINE'S REVENGE; OR, O'HARA'S WIFE, COMMENCED IN	316
LADY VIOLET'S VICTIMS	397	A RUSSIAN HERO; OR, MARKO TYRE'S TREASON	401
A RUSSIAN HERO; OR, MARKO TYRE'S TREASON	401	SCIENCE	403
LILLIE HAREWOOD'S VALENTINE	400	FACETIES	406
FACETIES	406	GENE	407
STATISTICS	407	HOUSEHOLD TROUBLES	407
MISCELLANEOUS	407	TRIFLED WITH FIRE COMMENCED IN	321

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

TOM.—The difference between an ordinary induction coil and a Ruhmkorff coil lies in the perfection of the insulation, the employment of a condenser, and a somewhat different mode of winding.

NERVINE.—The worst toothache, or neuralgia coming from the teeth, may be speedily ended by the application of a small bit of clean cotton saturated in a strong solution of ammonia to the defective tooth. Sometimes the sufferer is prompted to momentary, nervous laughter by the application, but the pain has disappeared.

SUPERFEE.—Before chilblains are broken, rub them once or twice a day with soap liniment, and wear warm worsted stockings. After they are broken apply poultices of bread and water, or of linseed meal.

PAINTER.—To remove the paint wet it with naphtha, and you can wipe it off clean.

HENRY.—To Japan tin, you can purchase the material ready mixed much better and cheaper than you can make it.

FAVOURITE NELL.—The price is only a secondary consideration. So much depends upon ability, natural and acquired.

S. H. N.—As yet they can only be obtained in America.

EMILY.—We make no charge.

MADCAP.—1. Light brown. 2. Prononce "maysal-jah." 3. Photo very expressive, with facetiousness strongly developed in the left eye and eyebrow.

PO-PAUL.—The bridegroom can call at any registry office and give notice of marriage. Every information will be given by the registrar. Witnesses are not necessary. The fees amount to about 7s. 6d.

RONACE.—The reference to 12 o'clock is a popular error. Having given a clear month's notice, a servant can leave at any time of the day on which the notice expires.

LLEWELLYN.—Yes, to both questions.

GIPSY QUEEN.—It is not usual to write acknowledging the presents.

R. P.—To make a good cement or paste for fastening glass covering on an iron roller melt together in an iron vessel, over a gentle fire, pitch and gutta-percha in about equal parts; use hot water, but not too hot.

DONALD.—"Auld Robin Gray" was written by Jane Gordon, a Scotch lady, who is supposed to have depicted her own case; the name of the composer of the music is not known, but it dates from about 1550. The words of "Robin Adair" are now included in Burns' poems, but the music has caused much controversy, and the author is not known.

L. B.—A concentrated solution of the soluble aniline black in water makes an excellent ink for writing on show cards or marking boxes; use hot water to make the solution.

BERTIE.—1. The seven wonders of the world were the Pyramids of Egypt, the Hanging Gardens of Semiramis, the Pharos of Alexandria, the Colossus at Rhodes, the Statue of Jupiter Olympus, the Temple of Diana at Ephesus, and the Tomb and Mausoleum of Artemisia. 2. Writing good.

PETER.—There is no meaning to it. "Erin slantru gal ga bragh" means "Ireland, dear, thy health for ever." 3. Michael Feeney was executed, but we are not certain as to date. 4. We cannot, we are sorry to say, undertake to work out arithmetical or mathematical problems for our readers.

JENNIE.—Sodium is chiefly used as a reducing agent in some metallurgical operations, as in the separation of aluminum and magnesium from their ores.

JAW.—Some of the letters are very well formed, but you do not appear to have sufficient command over your pen. 2. The styles of Scott, Dickens, and Thackeray are so entirely different that we should not like to hazard an opinion which was the best novelist.

TRADEMAN.—An electric light for a shop would involve an expenditure of £400.

HARRY.—To prepare artists' canvas dampen the canvas, tack it on the stretcher, apply a thin coating of starch sizing, and when dry apply thick paint of the desired tint.

BOB.—To remove stains of olive oil from glazed printed paper, moisten the spots with benzole and cover immediately with warm, dry piecemeal for a time. Repeat this treatment several times if necessary, using pressure.

P. K. and **D. L.**, two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen. **P. K.** is twenty-four, good-tempered, of a loving disposition, fond of home. **D. L.** is twenty, medium height, fair.

LOUIS., twenty-five, light hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a young man about the same age, dark, domesticated.

CLARE., twenty-two, dark hair and eyes, fond of home and children, tall, domesticated, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about twenty-four, dark, medium height.

G. M. and **C. B.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. **G. M.** is twenty, brown hair, blue eyes, good-tempered. **C. B.** is nineteen, medium height, brown hair, grey eyes.

M. A. and **E. A.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. **M. A.** is twenty-one, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, medium height. **E. A.** is seventeen, dark brown hair, blue eyes, medium height, of a loving disposition.

STREE., twenty-two, dark brown hair and eyes, tall, would like to correspond with a young lady with a view to matrimony. Must be nineteen, fond of home and children.

F. D. and **A. B.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. **F. D.** is twenty-three, light hair, blue eyes, medium height. **A. B.** is twenty-one, dark hair, blue eyes, tall. Both are seamen in the Royal Navy.

FLORENCE., twenty-three, fond of home and children, golden hair, blue eyes, loving, would like to correspond with a young man about twenty-four, dark hair, brown eyes, medium height, good-looking, fond of home and children.

THE ROUND-ABOUT WAY.

There's a "short cut" over the meadow,
That looks so smiling and fair,
You'd never think of the ditches
And thorns that are lurking there;
But though the road may be longer,
You'd better risk the delay,
For it's always safer and surer, friend,
To take the round-about way.

There's a "short cut" over the mountain,
But the path is so rough and steep—
That danger is sure to threaten
As painfully up you creep;
And ere you have half ascended
To the top of the summit grey,
You'll wish with many a sigh, my friend,
That you'd taken the round-about way.

There's a "short cut" many are taking,
Who wisdom and wealth would gain
Without the toil and the trouble,
The worry of heart and brain;
But knowledge thus caught is but folly,
And riches their trust betray,
Because they neglected to go, my friend,
The usual round-about way.

The patient and plodding worker,
Who is not afraid to soil
His hands with the marks of labour,
The tokens of manly toil,
Will find that for self-denial
The years to come will repay,
And prove that fame and an honest name
Prefer the round-about way.

No good that is worth our having,
No joy that will work no ill,
Is gained by hastily taking
The "short cut" over the hill;
And though the road may be longer,
Tis well to risk the delay,
For it's always safer and surer, friend,
To take the round-about way.

GERTRUDE., domesticated, and of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-threes.

H. P., twenty-one, tall, dark blue eyes, fair, domesticated, would like to correspond with a young gentleman with a view to matrimony. Must be twenty-four, dark hair and eyes.

S. B. and **R. A.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. **S. B.** is twenty-four, handsome, dark. **R. A.** is fair, blue eyes, good-tempered.

SAMMY., twenty-three, fair, good-looking, fond of home and children, would like to correspond with a loving, fair young lady.

ROBERT., eighteen, dark hair and eyes, fond of music and dancing, would like to correspond with a young lady about the same age.

T. B., twenty-two, dark, a seaman in the Royal Navy, fond of music and dancing, brown hair, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady about his own age, tall, light brown hair, hazel eyes, good-looking, fond of music.

ALICIA J., medium height, fair, dark eyes, would like to correspond with a dark gentleman about twenty-four, tall.

MARIE and **L. S.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. **Marie** is twenty-five, of a loving disposition, medium height, good-looking, fair. **L. S.** is twenty-one, good-tempered, tall, dark. Respondents must be between twenty-three and twenty-five.

D. L. and **L. G.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. **D. L.** is twenty-three, medium height. **L. G.** is twenty, tall. Respondents must be fond of music and dancing, good-looking.

MARGARET, ROSIE, and **MARY**, three friends, wish to correspond with three gentlemen with a view to matrimony. **Margaret** is twenty-one, fair, and domesticated. **Rosie** is nineteen, tall, fond of home and music. **Mary** is eighteen, fond of home and children.

ALBERT., tall, dark, hazel eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady living in or near Canterbury, nineteen, good-looking.

PEARL., eighteen, brown hair, dark blue eyes, medium height, wished to correspond with a young man about twenty-two, dark.

RUBY., eighteen, curly hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a fair young man about twenty-two.

W. G., thirty-three, medium height, civil engineer, would like to correspond with a dark young lady about twenty-five.

PAVILLE LEAVE, GENERAL LEAVE, and **HABITUAL LEAVE**, three seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with three young ladies with a view to matrimony. **Privilege Leave** is twenty-one, medium height, handsome. **General Leave** is twenty-five, good-looking, tall, fond of children. **Habitual Leave** is twenty-four, fond of children and dancing.

ERNEST and **JAMES**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. **Ernest** is tall, dark, and good-looking. **James** is tall, brown hair, blue eyes. Respondents must be about nineteen.

A. S., twenty, medium height, hazel eyes, would like to correspond with a seaman in the Royal Navy.

ALICE and **MAUD**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. **Alice** is twenty-five. **Maud** is twenty.

G. G. and **S. A. E.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. **G. G.** is twenty-two, dark hair, blue eyes. **S. A. E.** is nineteen, light hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition, medium height.

A. C., seventeen, would like to correspond with a young lady about the same age.

BENJAMIN and **ALFRED**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. **Benjamin** is twenty-two, light hair, grey eyes, medium height, dark, loving. **Alfred** is twenty-four, fond of home and children, dark, loving. Respondents must be between twenty and twenty-three, thoroughly domesticated, and good-tempered.

F. M. and **H. D.**, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies. **F. M.** is twenty-four, dark, fond of home and children, brown hair, blue eyes. **H. D.** is twenty-one, dark brown hair, blue eyes, good-looking, medium height, loving. Respondents must be between eighteen and twenty-one.

CLARA., twenty-one, fair, auburn hair, grey eyes, good-looking, of a loving disposition, and fond of home, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about the same age.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

F. D. is responded to by—**L. C.**, medium height, fair, blue eyes.

T. L. by—**M. J.**, tall, dark hair and eyes.

J. E. by—**E. S.**

G. B. by—**E. M.**

EMILY by—**W. G. R.**, twenty, tall.

TED by—**Lucy**, eighteen, fond of home and children.

EDWARD by—**Emmeline**, nineteen, fond of home.

BLANCHE by—**G. E.**, nineteen, dark.

HAND & HAWK by—**Burnhilda**, twenty, medium height, hazel eyes, fond of home, loving.

C. E. by—**Miss E.**, eighteen, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home.

J. H. by—**Florran**, eighteen.

B. H. by—**Lottie**, eighteen.

Jack by—**Nancy**, twenty, light brown hair, hazel eyes, fond of home and music.

C. W. by—**Maud H.**, seventeen, tall, brown hair, hazel eyes.

L. W. by—**Laura W.**, sixteen, light hair, blue eyes, and of a loving disposition.

Tom by—**Jennie**, twenty-one, dark hair and eyes, dark, good-looking, of a loving disposition.

ALL the Back Numbers, Parts, and Volumes of THE LONDON READER are in print, and may be had at the Office, 334, Strand; or will be sent to any part of the United Kingdom Post Free for Three-halfpence, Eightpence, and Five Shillings and Eightpence each.

THE LONDON READER, Post Free, Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Eightpence.

LIFE AND FASHION, Vols. 1 to 2, Price Seven Shillings and Sixpence each.

EVERYBODY'S JOURNAL, Parts 1 to 4, Price Threepence each.

Now Ready, Vol. XXXI. of THE LONDON READER Price 4s. 6d.

Also the TITLE and INDEX to Vol. XXXI. Price One Penny.

NOTICE.—Part 193 (Jan.) Now Ready, Price Sixpence, Post Free, Eightpence.

N.B.—Correspondents must add **ans** to their Letters to the Editor of THE LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

* We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us we cannot retain copies.

London: Published for the Proprietors at 334, Strand, by A. SMITH, & CO.